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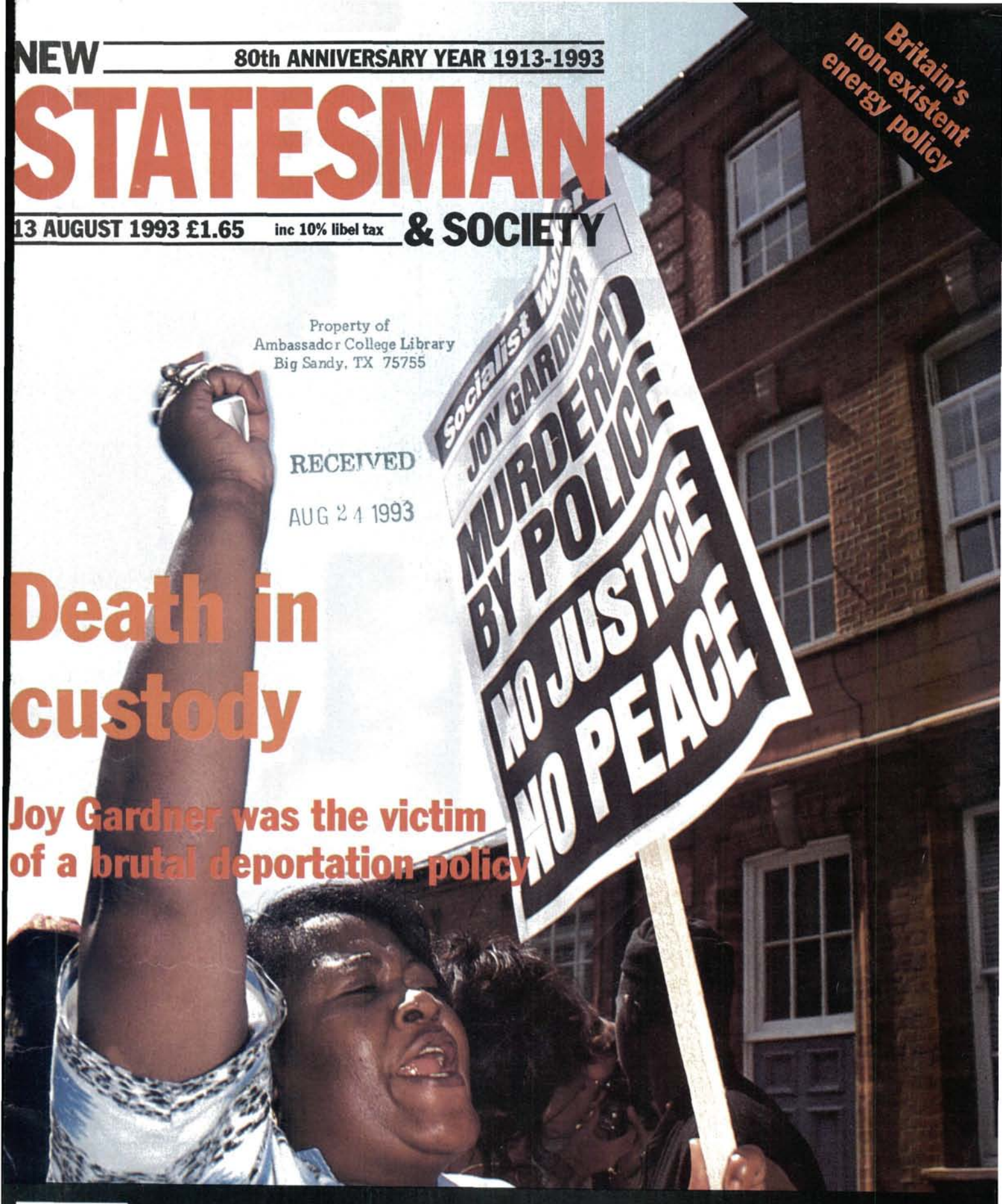
Death in custody

Joy Gardner was the victim of a brutal deportation policy



PLUS: Nick Hornby on the rise of football fanzines
Vicky Hutchings: Whitehaven's nuclear fixation
Ian Aitken: Labour's soundbite addicts; Lesbian chic;
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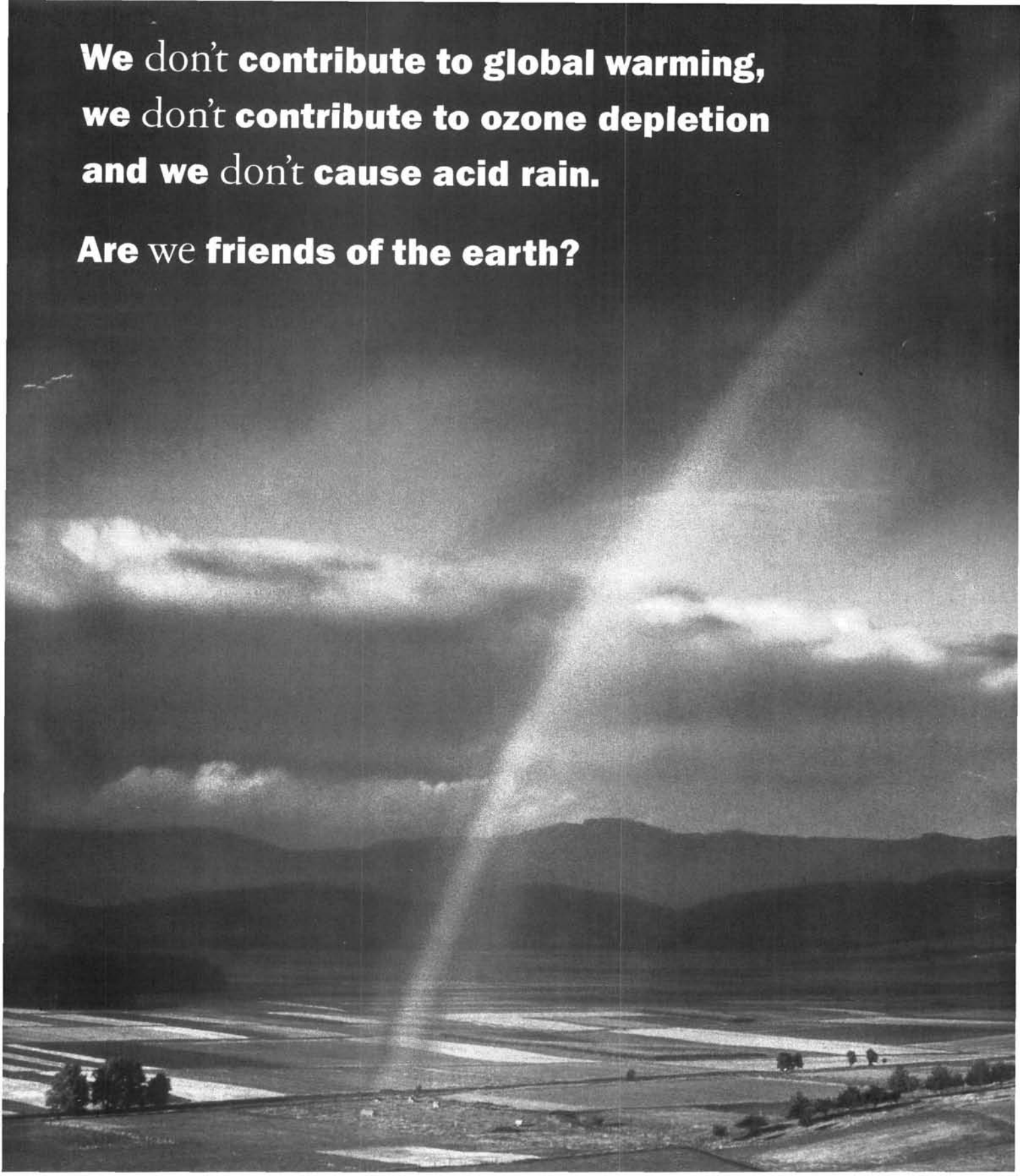

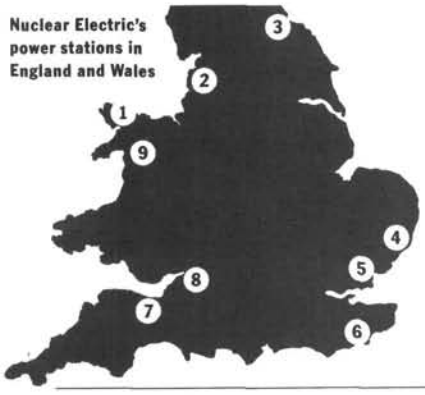

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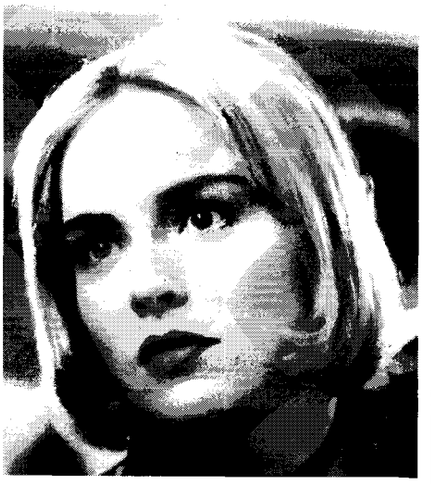
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The Defence Fund cricket test

Calling all cricket fans: The New Statesman Defence Fund takes the battle to the opposition next month with a celebrity cricket match in Huntingdon, green and pleasant home of John Major. Organised by local dissident Keith Bennett, the day provides the perfect opportunity to stump the Prime Minister on his own doorstep, on a lazy Saturday summer afternoon. Come and support *NSS* staff, contributors and cricket-playing MPs pounding a celebrity Huntingdon team into the dust on Saturday, 18 September. The entirely unbiased *NSS* contributor Ian Aitken will be umpiring the John Major Memorial Test, from 2pm to 6pm, at the St Peter's Road Cricket Ground, Huntingdon. All comers are welcome. And if you don't like cricket, then join the Defence Fund Huntingdon dinner at the Commemoration Hall from 8pm to 11pm. Tickets (£5/£8) from Lesley Shipgood, 60 Ouse Walk, Huntingdon (telephone 0480 458762).

Thank you also this week to Ruth Moulton, whose *NSS* 80th anniversary party raised £200 towards the Defence Fund. Anyone who would like to hold their own *NSS* 80th anniversary fundraising party can contact Nicola Baird or Nyta Mann for a free party pack. Credit card donations and T-shirt orders can also be phoned in to the Defence Fund on: 071-739 3211.

Keith Bennett, one of the lesser-known Huntingdon celebrity cricket team members, challenging NSS staff and MPs. Prime Minister John Major has been asked to captain the Huntingdon side.

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Andrzej Krauze

EMU is not impossible

In the wake of the collapse of the ERM after an orgy of speculation a fortnight ago, there was an immediate display of *schadenfreude* from British Eurosceptics of both left and right.

"The questions of economic and monetary union and a single currency have been resolved, not by arguments or even by votes, but by events," wrote Bryan Gould of "the ERM's collapse". "It should be a long time before European ideologues are accorded any credence when they assert that a single currency is not only desirable but inevitable."

"The issue of monetary union is dead and with it the main substance of the Maastricht treaty, which history will record as a milestone to nowhere," crowed the *Spectator* about "the crisis which killed the ERM".

The Eurosceptics might just turn out to be right about the death of the ERM and the fate of EMU—but, now that the dust has begun to settle, the indications are that they are not. Although there is a consensus among British commentators, shared by the British government, that the events of the week before last mean that EMU is certain to be delayed, even in Britain there is a widespread sense that some sort of managed exchange rates system, probably based on a retightening of the ERM, is essential if intolerable strain is not to be placed on the EC's internal market.

On the Continent, now that the initial shock of having been stung by the speculators is over, the mood is far more upbeat. The European Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to the Maastricht strategy for EMU and poured scorn on the British government's revived proposal for a "hard ECU". There is some disagreement between the French and German governments over whether full EMU should be complete by 1997 or whether it might have to wait until 1999—but both have insisted that stage two of EMU (creation of a European Monetary Institute and the fixing of ERM parities in narrow bands) will go ahead as planned next January.

Some of this is bravado: it is difficult to conceive of a return to the ERM as it was a fortnight ago, let alone a further squeezing of the bands within which ERM currencies are allowed to fluctuate, unless the Bundesbank makes massive cuts in interest rates. So far, there is no sign that the Bundesbank is ready to do any such thing: it remains worried about the continuing inflationary impact of German unification.

But there is no reason to expect that German interest rates will remain at their current levels for ever—and once they come down it will be perfectly feasible to get back to a managed exchange rate system in Europe and, from there, to move towards monetary union, just as envisaged by Maastricht. It could even be that the experience of a fortnight ago will prompt the major players to move more quickly on monetary union than the Maastricht timetable suggests once German interest rates come down.

This is not, of course, to claim that moving ahead with EMU is the highest priority in economic policy for Europe: that remains dealing with the recession, which should be easier now that most of Europe has been freed from the obligation to keep interest rates up in order to maintain currency parities with the Deutschmark. Nor is it to argue that it will be easy to get from here to EMU: it will not, even if nothing like the shock of German unification once again throws the whole process into confusion.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Maastricht process has probably *not* ground to a halt does mean that it is important for the left, both British and Continental, to put some serious thought to the sort of Europe that it would like to see built on Maastricht's foundations. For most of the Continental left, and for the British Liberal Democrats, this is a simple matter of developing long-held ideas about a democratic federal Europe. For the British Labour Party, however, it is a large-scale problem. The party has given no sign of even starting to think coherently beyond Maastricht.

It is at once in favour of "deepening" the European Community and of enlarging it. It wants more power for the European Parliament—but not at the expense of the powers of national parliaments. It favours "Europe-wide strategies for growth", but does not know which institutions it wants to pursue them. And so one could go on.

Labour does have its excuse. It is not long since it finally abandoned the idea that Britain might leave the EC, and Europe remains an issue on which it is divided: to keep all sections of the party happy requires a delicate balancing act, the argument goes, and if coherence and vision are absent as a result, so be it. But there is a limit to how long this excuse can continue to be taken seriously. In three years, the governments of the EC will be negotiating agreements on the second stage of European union that will flesh out the bare skeleton of Maastricht, giving Europe a shape that will be very difficult to change afterwards. If Labour means to have any influence at all on the outcome of these negotiations, it is essential that it decides what it wants from them.

This is particularly true where the political structure of the EC is concerned. Europe suffers from a severe democratic deficit. The European Parliament is very much the junior partner of the unelected Commission and the intergovernmental Council of Ministers, which meets behind closed doors. The obvious way of democratising the EC would be to give the European Parliament greatly increased powers over EC business, possibly even the powers to elect the Commission as a sort of cabinet from among its members. Is it too much to hope that Labour is brave enough to put its doubts behind it once and for all and embrace the goal of a democratic federal Europe?

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Major's cynical offer to Irma

It is difficult to think of any action more cynical than John Major's decision to send an aircraft to Sarajevo to fly out a little girl for medical treatment in Britain.

The only reason that Major did it was that pictures of Irma Hadzimuratovic, aged five, critically ill in hospital with shrapnel wounds, had made it on to the front pages of the newspapers and on to the television news.

Her plight touched the nation's heart: the papers and the BBC received hundreds of calls from people asking how they could help. Major's mercy mission was simply a brazen attempt to milk that concern and to give the impression that the British government really is trying to do something about the plight of Bosnia.

Initially, he had no intention even of extending the service granted little Irma to any of the hundreds of other children now suffering in Sarajevo and the other besieged cities in Bosnia. It was only after journalists made it clear that Irma's was not a unique case, and that Britain's record of taking patients from Bosnia was far worse than Germany's, France's or America's, that the government shamefacedly announced that others too would be flown out to hospital in Britain.

It is, of course, impossible to object to children who are victims of war being given medical treatment. But the case of Irma cannot be looked at in isolation from Britain's Bosnia policy as a whole—and the unavoidable truth is that Major's generosity to Irma cannot possibly make up for the damage that he and his government have done in the past two years.

Since the very beginning of the war in Bosnia, the British government has played a despicable role. Along with France, it has consistently (and so far succesfully) opposed allowing the Bosnian government to buy the arms it needs to defend itself against the Serb (and increasingly Croat) aggression that has brought it to its knees, claiming that the war is not essentially one of aggression but rather a civil conflict.

The British and French have also been the powers most responsible for blocking international military intervention to defend Bosnia, until last week holding out successfully against even US proposals for the most limited use of air power against the Serbs.

Even in the past week, having grudgingly backed US President Bill Clinton's threat of air strikes against Serb forces if the siege of Sarajevo is not lifted, the British government has fought a strong rearguard action against Clinton's efforts to put his threat into practice, claiming that air strikes would sabotage the peace talks in Geneva and would endanger the British ground troops engaged in protecting humanitarian relief convoys. The possibility that the troops could be withdrawn, or reassigned to the task of defending Bosnia from aggression, seems to have been conveniently overlooked.

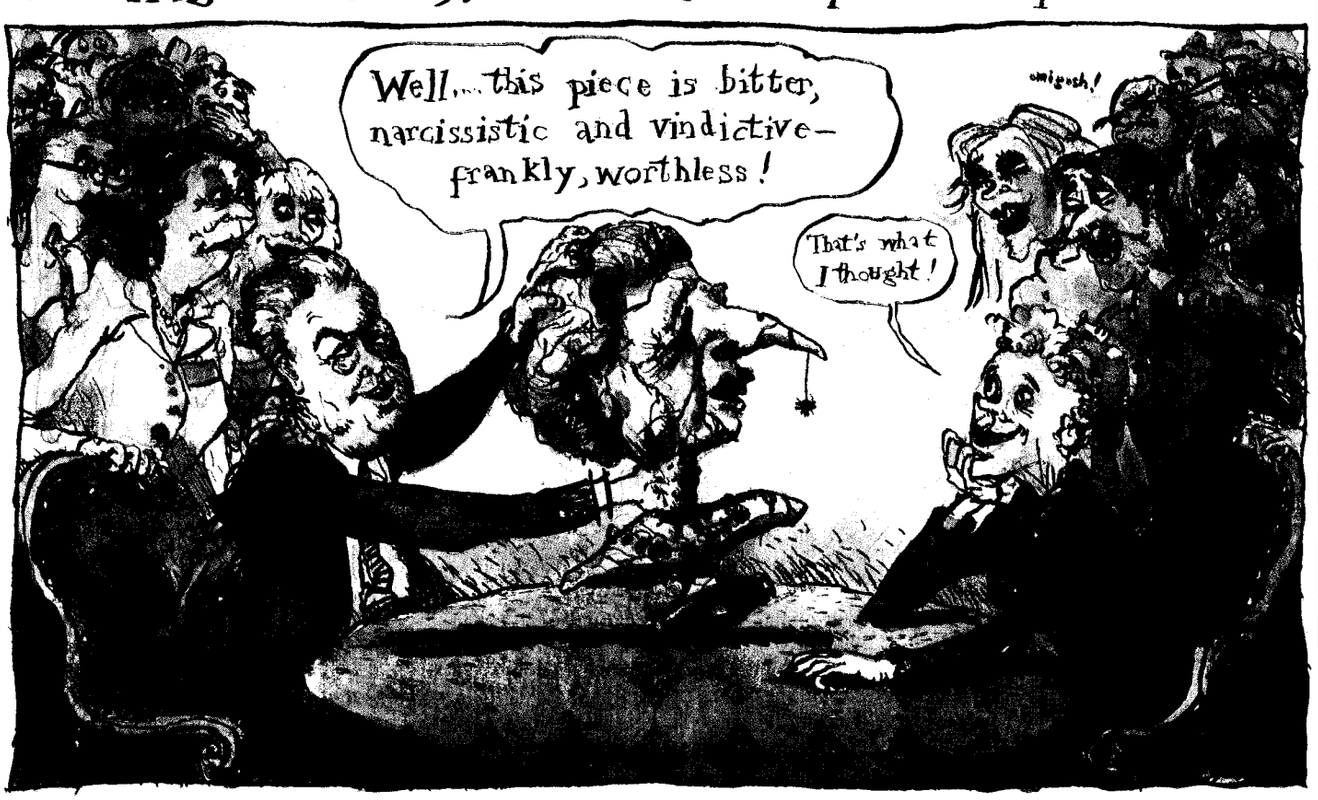
But British government guilt does not stop with the blocking of the military intervention needed to save Bosnia. The British government also bears a heavy responsibility for encouraging the aggressors by backing a series of "peace plans" based on carving up Bosnia into ethnically based cantons or statelets.

By making it obvious that they do not believe Bosnia to be a viable political entity, Major and company have given vital succour to Radovan Karadzic and his thugs as they have "ethnically cleansed" their country.

If Britain had made it clear from the outset that it was in favour of a multi-ethnic unitary state in Bosnia, and had been prepared to back its words with force of arms, it is just possible that Irma would not now be fighting for her life in a London hospital but would be playing with her friends in a peaceful, safe Sarajevo.

FELIX BENNETT

Hugh Scully (of the Antiques Roadshow) is to present a BBC programme about Margaret Thatcher, to co-incide with the publication of her memoirs.



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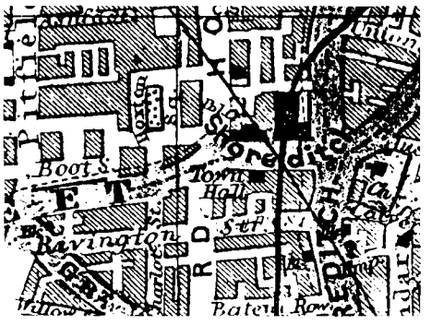

Shoreditch can this week reveal that the glitch in all those opinion polls, which let us down so badly last year, has finally been identified: Malcolm Wicks MP. The Labour MP for Croydon North West has been holidaying in the New Forest, leaving the cares of parliament and politics temporarily behind him. During an afternoon stroll, a kindly looking woman approached him and asked if he would mind answering some questions about politics. Thinking his fame had preceded him, Wicks duly agreed, and asked the woman what she wanted to know. To which came the reply: "If there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" Yes, he had just been entrapped by a Gallup pollster. Wicks duly worked his way through the entire gamut of questions—"Which party did you vote for at the last general election . . . Do you involve yourself in any political activities . . . Are you satisfied with the performance of the current government . . .", and so on. So now we know the truth behind Labour's current high opinion poll ratings.

The Anti-Racist Alliance has just secured a little corporate sponsorship from Timberland, the makers of rugged footwear and all-weather clothing. As well as donating leather jackets to ARA's fundraising raffle later this year, the two organisations have have co-produced a lorryload of lapel badges carrying the slogan "Give racism the boot"—accompanied, naturally, by a large picture of the famous Timberland boot. Unfortunately, it now seems that some animal rights groups are up in arms that ARA has given the company—best known for its leather goods—the opportunity for some right-on product placement.

The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) is laying down plans to counter Operation Rescue, the militant American anti-abortion group that is threatening to come to Britain this September in order to demonstrate outside clinics here. One of Operation Rescue's favoured modes of attack is to harangue and physically restrain women as they enter these clinics. At one such Operation Rescue "blockade" in Florida earlier this year, an anti-abortion demonstrator shot and killed a doctor. NAC is looking for women to attend a public "speak-out" on 4 September in central London, at which women who have had abortions will openly state that they have had them. Women in prominent positions are also sought. If you can't attend the speak-out, you can add your name to a list to be read out and displayed on the day.

Part of the reason for holding the speak-out is that one of Operation Rescue's claims is that women are so ashamed of having abortions that they will never admit it, and that those who do claim to have had them are "plants". Call NAC on 071-923 4976 if you can add your name to the fight against these dangerous nutters.

The Labour Party has hit upon a novel way to spread sweetness and harmony throughout Walworth Road. Party general secretary Larry Whitty, campaigns organiser Sally Morgan, head of policy Roland Wales and director of organisations Peter Coleman have just returned from an outward bound-style management training course—the sort where you scale cliffs, catch rabbits and swim across rivers in the hope that the spirit of teamwork arises and lasts at least until you get back to the office. Shoreditch sends its sympathies to shadow cabinet members, who may now face the prospect of undergoing the alarmingly energetic ordeal themselves.

Shoreditch has just received the annual breakdown of NSS overseas subscribers. The good news is we now have thousands of readers across Europe. The more mystifying news is that in the whole of Tonga, we have only one. Whoever you are, hello!

Cosmopolitan editor Marcelle D'Argy Smith, Democratic Left's Nina Temple, the Women's Institute and *Woman's Own* aren't the likeliest group of people to set up a joint political venture. But all four have joined forces, along with a number of others, for Women's Lip, a rolling campaign leading up to 21 April next year. The Women's Lip mission statement declares its aim as: "To make visible on one day the invisible force in the country—women—and our view that the way in which society is organised is outmoded." Plans for the day itself include a 15-minute "fax-out" when women across the country flood the nation's fax machines with the group's logo: a red lipstick kiss. Yes, Shoreditch knows it all sounds horribly eighties, but gives its good luck anyway.

FOURTH ESTATE

A regular monitor of the tabloid press

5 August: The death of Joy Gardner provokes an outbreak of plain speaking—and it's Metropolitan police chief Paul Condon who gets the flak. The *Express* slams his decision to suspend three of the officers involved, calling it "a victory for the mob". In the *Sun*, Richard Littlejohn (a peace-loving resident of Hornsey, where Mrs Gardner was arrested) complains that Condon has capitulated to threats of race riots from the SWP "and the odious Bernie Grant, who is not even the MP for Hornsey". As for Mrs Gardner, she had no right to live in this country. "If she had complied with the deportation order she might be alive today."

6 August: The *Star* reveals that Norman Lamont hasn't cottoned on to the demise of the old 10p. The former Chancellor was caught trying to pay for his cup of British Rail coffee with illegal tender. "Now you begin to realise just why the nation's finances got in such a state," giggles the *Star*. "Because Norman isn't a full shilling."

7 August: The *Mail* is sniffy about the gift-shop offerings at Buck House. "A photograph frame—priced at £12—resembles the garish, betassled curtains of a 1950s cinema. The desk-tidy, a replica of the Palace facade, at £45, reduces an enigma to a child's toy. As for the jewellery, it barely rises abover Ratner standards." Time for Ma'am's marketing men to pull their socks up.

8 August: More Gardner revelations on the front page of the *Mail on Sunday*. "Joy Tried to Gas Me," claims her husband, "60-year-old, deeply religious Mr Gardner". His testimony, says the paper, "calls into question attempts by left-wing agitators to portray her as a martyr of police brutality..

While Woodrow Wyatt takes a well-earned rest, *News of the World* readers have to make do with John Major. "The British people aren't mugs," he flatters, warning of cuts in welfare spending. "You know there's no such thing as a free lunch." The PM hails economic recovery, defends the Citizen's Charter, and takes a swipe at the Lib Dems (Newbury and Christchurch making their mark at last). His parting shot? "The trouble with this country is that there are too many people saying 'The trouble with this country is . . .'"

9 August: In his *Express* column, Kilroy Silk queries the *Independent's* campaign to save Sarajevo. Some of the names published in support are, he considers, "very un-English. Interesting, isn't it, how these *Independent* readers with foreign-sounding names are so ready to send British troops into battle and find it so easy to offer to spill British blood?"

10 August: Flying sick children into London is another story. The *Express* front page has "Operation Baby Love: Major acts to save little Irma from war hell." A satisfied editorial says, "At least we have not passed her by on the other side." Not her, perhaps.

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Suave **Sean French** on nuns' habits, bell-bottoms and jugglers' jockstraps

When I was at school we were always having to write essays in response to questions of the following kind: "Young people claim that they want to dress as individuals, yet they all want to be individuals in the same way. Discuss." Behind it all was a rather pathetic dispute between the pot and the kettle about which was the blacker.

The teachers at our school all wore tweed jackets, sub-flannel grey trousers (this always used to confuse me when referred to in novels —I used to imagine trousers made out of the material used for face flannels, which gave me a disastrously wrong impression when reading about some louchely suave Oxford undergraduate in an Evelyn Waugh novel) and, for the most part, Corfam slip-on shoes. Readers under the age of 30 probably assume I'm referring to the ex-Labour minister, Gerald Corfam, so I had better explain that Corfam was a plastic leather-substitute that bore no resemblance in any way whatever to leather. The television commercial for Corfam shoes showed a business executive stepping in a muddy puddle on his way into the office. On arriving, he merely wiped his shoes with a wet cloth and their shine was restored. He could probably have hosed down his nylon suit while he was at it.

I recently saw Umberto Eco quoted as saying that he would have liked to have lived in the 17th century, were it not for the fact that nobody ever washed. But can this have been any worse than the smell that must have emanated from business meetings in the late 1960s where everybody present—all men, of course—was wearing nylon suits, shirts, underpants and socks, with plastic shoes? The atmosphere must have been like—to use an expression from my schooldays—the inside of a juggler's jockstrap.

While our teachers were thus garbed, we pupils were wearing trousers that were very narrow at the top and wide at the bottom and shirts with vast collars. Shoes changed with extraordinary frequency. There were platform shoes. There was a kind of black leather shoe called, I have to guess the spelling because I never saw it written down, Silatioes—and now that I have written it down it looks rather perverse, a word for oral foot fetishism, perhaps. They had a sort of black leather raffia effect on the top bit of the foot, and skinheads wore them for a while.

Then there was a brief craze for loafers with tassels on, and I was actually given a pair by my parents. They looked fantastic when I tried them on at home, but when I got to school it became clear that I had got the wrong kind. The difference was subtle but absolutely decisive. In that culture of taxonomic precision, a miss was far worse than a mile, and I would have been better off wearing Corfam shoes, or even Pathfinders, those wonderful shoes with pawprints of various wild animals on the sole and a small compass inside the shoe, under the heel. They were perfect for hunting. You could identify the print of your prey by comparing it with the one on the sole of your shoe and then track it using the compass, though it would only have been much use against something slow-moving like a wombat, since you would have had to hop after it while consulting the shoe that you were holding in your hand.

It was the loafers' failure that convinced me that I would never get it right. Even if I had obtained the right brand of shoe, I would have probably got the wrong kind of Ben Sherman shirt, so I decided to attempt permanent neutrality of dress, which is a problematic concept in itself. I tried to explain it to someone just the other day and she responded aggressively: "What sort of effect are you trying to create by doing that?" I felt like the pre-glasnost *New Yorker* cartoon in which a man is being asked by some threatening eastern bloc official: "Why are your papers in order?"

I don't despise fashionable clothes. Quite the opposite. I would love to have those suits that Michael Ignatieff and Paul Morley wear on television, and those shirts that button up all the way to the top. But if I tried it, it would go all wrong. When I button my shirts all the way up, I get a stab in my Adam's apple every time I say anything, or swallow, which I do a lot when I get nervous, so I would be disastrous in front of camera, saying something like: "Good evening, on tonight's *Late Show* we have a panel discussion about funding of . . . ow!" and some technician would have to come out on live television and detach the skin of my neck from my shirt.

Wearing jeans and any old shirt all the time is a calculated effect like any other, but at least it's a quick calculated effect. Last week, I went for my once-every-two-years' shop for jeans into Gap, or should that be *The* Gap. I have to admit that I have become irredeemably confused by the definite article, which seems now to be arbitrarily present or absent. There was a Bruce Willis comedy-thriller called *The Last Boy Scout* and now there is an Arnold Schwarzenegger comedy-thriller from the same writer called *Last Action Hero*. Then there are these new sections of papers which used to be called *Culture*, which are now called *The Culture*. I suspect that this column should be called *The* Diary, to show that it's not just any old diary.

As I was rummaging through the piles of jeans, I saw there was a sale at the other end of the shop, also of jeans. The jeans in the sale were about half the price, but they had slightly different shaped pockets and they were slightly baggier, or slightly less baggy, than the new ones. Of course I bought the cheap kind, so, if you ever see me in the street, look closely, and you'll see that I've now even got the wrong kind of neutral clothes.

But none of this is what I wanted to talk about at all. What this is all more or less leading up to is an article that I read last week in the fashion pages of the *Times* titled "Martyrdom comes into fashion". Religious robes, it seems, are now in. Jean-Paul Gaultier, for example, "has based his collection on the ritual dress of the Hassidic Jews, complete with prayer shawls, phylacteries, fur-trimmed hats and side curls", and the maestro himself came out at the end to receive his applause in a "jewelled yarmulke". Other designers feature cardinals' robes, nuns' habits, and one Yohji Yamamoto outfit was topped off with a crown of barbed-wire thorns—just the thing to wear after that special Supper, one infers. The models themselves have had their hair cut penitentially short, or even shaved altogether, and the style derives logically from the newly fashionable pale, emaciated models, who look as if they have just been rescued from a few months' fasting and immurement in a convent.

I disagree with the observation by the *Times* writer, Alice Thomson, that "Religion, not sex, is suddenly in." All these religious traditions, the female self-mortification, the rich costume of High-Church Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, are riddled with a sexuality that is almost of a double kind. There is the actual sensuality, the concentration on the body, and then the thrill of forbidden sexuality. To my own, corrupted gaze the catwalk models in their pilgrim's robes out of which emerge their austerely beautiful countenances are like the heroines in the novels of the Marquis de Sade.

The exception to this is the Hassidic costume, which is not a repository of sexual fantasy in the same way and is, to me, uncomfortably reminiscent of the cartooning of Jewish costume in propaganda films. I notice, incidentally, that these designers made no use of the dinky robes sported by ayatollahs. Wouldn't they look just dandy on Naomi or Cindy?

In its frivolous humourlessness, this new look has the air of a wild, black parody in a Woody Allen film or a Terry Southern novel, an effect accentuated by the solemn fashion experts who observe that this new get-up is puritanical, or even a spiritual preparation for the millennium. In the meantime, is there any motif that hasn't been drawn on? Perhaps next year we shall see some even thinner supermodels prancing in front of the cameras in those striped outfits that they used to wear in Alcatraz, available with a stick-on temporary tattoo with your own personal number.

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Labour's soundbite addicts

One of the few Silly Season laughs in an otherwise grim start to the holidays, was a news report to the effect that senior Labour politicians were angry with the BBC for allowing Tory MPs so much airtime to argue about the divisions in their (ie, the Conservative) party. It seems that these anonymous senior figures (when, by the way, did you last read about *junior* politicians doing this or that?) were upset that Labour MPs weren't getting an equivalent crack of Auntie's whip.

This, surely, is the ultimate example of that preposterous political myth that there is no such thing as bad publicity. Presumably, the grumbling Labour MPs would have been perfectly happy to see two or three of their colleagues (or better still, themselves) knocking six bells out of each other over, let us say, Labour's very real but well-hidden disagreements over Europe. Failing that, they would presumably have liked the BBC to stop letting the Tories wash their dirty linen on their screens.

But perhaps that is unfair. It is much more likely that the complainers, had they been asked, would have replied that they wanted the BBC to allow more time to Gordon Brown, so that he could be cross-examined in detail on the contents of Labour's alternative economic policy. Or possibly they wanted lots of extra time for David Blunkett, so that he could describe Labour's plans for reversing the destruction of the NHS under Mrs Bottomley. Or maybe they hankered after some additional television outlets for Jack Cunningham, enabling him to describe in detail Labour's alternative to the government's do-nothing approach to events in Sarajevo.

The trouble with this, however, is that one only has to name these subject-headings to realise that expert cross-examination on them is probably the last thing Labour's shadow spokesmen really want to undergo. Exposure of that kind would be all-too-likely to reveal the notorious—indeed, deliberate—absence of comprehensive policies on an alarmingly wide range of issues.

To be sure, Brown does his persistent best to get on the radio and the television as often as possible—indeed, usually more often than possible. But what he has to say when he gets there is broad-brush stuff, to say the least, and so repetitive that it might be a video. Notoriously, he is strong on analysis but rather weaker on prescription, leaving his listeners to wonder how his relatively modest proposals for action could be thought to match up to the Augean task he is setting himself.

Even some of John Major's nicer ministers could agree with Brown's repetitive assertions about removing the fear of unemployment, increasing investment, and so forth. Indeed, only those who subscribe to the Norman Lamont view that unemployment is good for you (though not, it now turns out, so good for him) are likely to dissent from so obvious a thesis. The problem, alas, is how to create the jobs and conjure up the investment.

But recently, we have had a further addition to the Brown armoury. He has declared that, far from financing investment, training and job creation out of taxation, the relatively modest tax increases proposed by Labour at the last election have become inoperative, to use the White House's famous phrase. Voters worried about their national insurance contributions or their higher tax bands apparently need worry no longer. It was all a mistake—or, at any rate, has been overtaken by events.

Smith, Brown and Cook had better get started on putting the case for tax increases to the voters right now

This move was prompted no doubt by the widespread belief that it was John Smith's tax proposals that enabled the Tories and their lickspittles in the press to roll back the opinion polls and return Major to office in June 1992. As it happens, I do not accept this analysis, preferring the rather more comprehensive explanation that voters hadn't forgotten the madness that gripped the Labour Party in the mid-1980s, and simply didn't trust them not to go barmy again.

But that is neither here nor there. For, even if it were true that Smith's tax plans provoked a mass desertion by the voters, it does not follow that nothing could have been done about it. What went wrong was that the party panicked in the face of the massed ranks of the headline-writers and tried to pretend that almost everyone would escape the increases. It was not believed, and no wonder.

True, it was rather late to launch a fightback in the middle of the campaign. But it should have been attempted, not least on the basis of Mr Smith's unchallengeable credentials as a truly Christian socialist. What he was proposing was an attempt to roll back mass unemployment by means of a fairer distribution of the burden. To capitulate to the Murdoch press in such circumstances looked like an acceptance of greed as the sole motivation of human activity.

If you find that assertion rather sweeping, let us look back to what happened in 1959. For the general election of that year bore some striking similarities to last year's débâcle. Not the least of them was that Labour lost even though it expected to win. And the issues at the heart of the defeat were, first, a long preceding period of internal turmoil in the Labour Party—and, second, tax policy.

On the first of these, it is worth remarking that the Bevanite controversies of the 1950s were hardly in the same league as the horrendous divisions generated by Tony Benn and his Trotskyist allies in the 1980s. But the question of tax policy has a more immediate relevance. For, in the middle of the 1959 election campaign, Hugh Gaitskell, the much admired Labour leader, declared that there would be no increase in income tax under a Labour government. In an argument that is now all too familiar, he claimed that Labour's programme would be paid for by the increased revenue generated by economic growth.

The pledge came under instant attack from the Conservatives and their Fleet Street allies. With due respect to the inexact science of psephology, no one can be certain whether it was the decisive issue in Labour's defeat. But there is no doubt that it was an important factor, not least because it dented Gaitskell's image as a man whose honesty could be contrasted favourably with the slick showmanship of his opponent, Harold Macmillan. Rightly or wrongly, people didn't believe the promise, and thought Gaitskell had made it simply to buy votes.

There is no need to spell out the moral of this story—it speaks for itself. But there are practical conclusions that I believe the highly intelligent team of super-Scots that currently runs the Labour front bench is well qualified to recognise. The first of these is that there genuinely *is* a case for tax increases once the present recession has ended, as the only reliable means of funding the sort of public investment programme that clearly will be essential by the time Labour has any hope of gaining office. The second is that the case for such increases *can* be put to the decent, honourable majority of British voters in a convincing way, and that enough people *can* be persuaded to support it to ensure the return of a Labour government.

But the third is that Smith, Brown and Cook had better get started on putting that case to the voters right now, instead of waiting for the hysterical atmosphere of the election campaign to befuddle our minds. Come on, Gordon—get on with it.

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Clinton bows to Wall Street

The Clinton budget has emerged from the crucible of compromise between the Senate and House of Representatives. The president hails the weary legislators, and predicts that his prudent economic management has set the nation on the path to long-term prosperity.

The flaw in this rosy prospectus is that almost every economist of repute believes that Clinton's budget is deflationary, and will further slow the spindle-shanked US economy. The entire programme of tax hikes and deficit slashing is built on premises that are either shaky or wrong.

Take first the tax hikes for richer Americans. Martin Feldstein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under Ronald Reagan, has argued that the predicted revenues will not materialise. Rather than send larger cheques to the Internal Revenue Service, those richer Americans will either work less or—noting that the capital gains tax has not gone up—take their money in the form of stock options and kindred devices, rather than as salary income.

The rationale for cutting the deficit has also been based on flawed reasoning, or on predictions for which there are scant supporting economic data. One argument is that high deficits cause a "crowding out" effect, with the huge public debt soaking up the pool of available capital, and making private-sector borrowing too expensive. The problem here is that such "crowding out" has never occurred in US history. And there are other, far more certain ways of lowering interest rates.

Equally problematic is the claim that lowered interest rates will, in fact, stimulate the economy. Evidence for this is very weak.

The final shaky proposition is that the deficit cutting won't have any negative effects. The Democratic National Committee is brandishing a study from the US Treasury which claims that the Clinton plan will, over the next three to five years, produce 1,931,473 jobs in California alone.

But as Herb Stein, another former chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, said recently, any freshman course in economics instructs us that to cut spending and raise taxes produces slowdown. At least two economic models confirm this. DRI/McGraw Hill took a plan very close to Clinton's budget, ran it through their computers, and forecast a slowing of economic growth by an average of 0.4 per cent a year, with a 1.8 million reduction in job creation. The Congressional Budget Office predicts a slowdown in growth of 0.5 per cent a year, with 2.5 million fewer jobs being created over the next four years.

Stein, who ran the Council of Economic Advisors in the Nixon years, suggests that the only merit of pushing ahead with the Clinton Plan is that deficit reduction has become a

national objective, like the early 1960s aim of putting a man on the Moon.

The problem with this analogy is that the moon mission generated a large number of jobs, whereas deficit reduction on the Clinton model does the opposite. The deficit obsession, fanned by the press, has been an unmitigated disaster.

Ross Perot brandishes a similarly weak analogy when he compares the battle to reduce the deficit with the sacrifices accepted by Americans in fighting the second world war. But the war is what truly ended the Depression and gave the US prosperity again. The sacrifice was human, not economic. America thrived, with total debt at the war's end being about 144 per cent of GNP. There was no hysteria about the deficit then. Today, total debt is about 58 per cent of GNP.

The Clinton Plan, which plots the country's economic course over the next four years, with supposed deficit reduction of about $500 billion, is essentially a watered down version of what Ross Perot called for in the presidential campaign. It's not what Clinton called for, which was public investment for growth. Instead of those bold pledges and bright horizons, we've ended up with a mix of Perot and the Bush 1990 budget compromise.

Traitor to his promises in so many respects, Clinton in this budget is enacting the greatest treachery of all, an old-line Republican austerity programme dictated to him by Wall Street and the banks.

The day of political reckoning will come in the mid-term elections of 1994, when Democrats will face the wrath of voters who had hoped for a change, but who instead have more long years of job loss and stagnation to look forward to. Clinton had his window of opportunity. Now it's shut, with no one more deserving of blame than himself.

Alexander Cockburn

15 YEARS AGO

"The Pope, the Flesh and the Devil"
11 August 1978

Christopher Hitchens on Paul VI

To judge by the tide of uncritical sentimentality which has swept over the press at the death of Pope Paul, and the way in which the Palace announced that flags on public buildings would be flown at half mast, you might have thought that the Reformation had never taken place . . . But even the most sycophantic obituarists were in some difficulty with Paul's stated and adamantine views on contraception and the need for priests to be celibate.

In terms of internal and external Roman Catholic politics, Paul was dismally reactionary. On infallibility, he was especially lyrical, describing it as "a beneficent lighthouse which guides the Church to its unrenounceable conquest: the truth of salvation." Hard, in that case, to imagine how for so many centuries the Church got along without it . . .

Who killed the Butcher?

Death by unnatural causes is commonplace in the politically explosive, bandit-ridden north Caucasus foothills. But the man mown down last week by masked gunmen—who, in true local fashion, made their escape on horseback into the dense forests of north Ossetia—was no ordinary victim.

Viktor Polyanichko, or "the Butcher" as his many enemies called him, was hand-picked by Boris Yeltsin to be governor of the blood-soaked republics of north Ossetia and Ingushetia, on Russia's southern flank. He gained notoriety in the 1980s as the Kremlin's man in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. Yet he managed to top the legion stories of his brutality there when, in January 1990, he oversaw the massacre of hundreds of pro-democracy demonstrators in the Azerbaijani capital Baku, as the Red Army rolled in to prop up the collapsing Soviet empire.

Yeltsin was in desperate need of a "strong man" to enforce a Russian state of emergency over a large swathe of Ossetian and Ingush territory. Polyanichko's curriculum vitae obviously caught his eye. But Polyanichko, who was recently elevated to the position of joint-deputy prime minister of Russia, lasted less than a month in the north Ossetian capital of Vladikavkav. The hail of automatic fire he ran into last week made him the highest-ranking Moscow official (show trials excluded) to be assassinated since Sergei Kirov died in equally murky circumstances in 1934.

A team of investigators, including Russia's defence minister, Pavel Grachev, and headed

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NEWS FROM ELSEWHERE

by another deputy prime minister, Sergei Shakrai, was immediately despatched to the region to track down the assassins. A week later, an exhausted Shakrai admitted he was not getting very far—there were simply too many suspects.

Ask any of the 5,000 Russian troops in the region, referred to as "peacekeepers" in distant Moscow, and, to a man, they'll tell you the culprit is Ingush. For their part, the mainly Muslim Ingush community (150,000-strong) feel they are the hardest-done people in the region. Deported *en masse* by Stalin to desolate Kazhakstan for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis, about 20,000 perished in cattle-trucks. They began returning to their ancient homelands in the late 1950s, following the Khrushchev thaw. But during their enforced absence, tens of thousands of the predominantly Christian Ossetians, their western neighbours and traditional enemies, had moved into their homes.

The war that broke out between the two ethnic groups last November saw 330 people killed in the first week of fighting, and 60,000 Ingush pushed across the border from North Ossetia into Ingushetia. Russia declared a state of emergency in the region, deploying troops to keep the warring parties aside. The Ingush say the Russians sided with the Ossetians in the fighting—the worst anywhere in the Russian Federation since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Angered by Russia's subsequent failure to resettle any of the Ingush refugees, Ingush fighters have launched an unofficial war against Russian troops. Raids on ammunition dumps, shelling of Russian bases and ambushes have become part of daily life in the tense region.

The ambush of Polyanichko was a fairly standard operation, in accordance with Ingush military tactics. Most Ossetians and Russians believe that the blame lies with Ingush attackers. Yet the republic's president, Ruslan Aushev, solemnly attended Polyanichko's state funeral in Moscow—where he squarely accused Ossetians of responsibility for the killing.

Why would the fiercely pro-Russian Ossetians (who still call their country a Soviet Socialist Republic, and welcome the presence of Russian troops) kill Yeltsin's man? The explanation advanced by the Ingush is that, after nine months of dithering, Russia was about to resettle Ingush refugees in Ossetia this month—under the immediate supervision of Polyanichko.

The Russian media have decided to air their own versions of events. Within one week, the killers have been portrayed as vengeful Afghan terrorists; members of an Armenian hit-squad; and, most interestingly, a Russian special unit.

Why was Polyanichko driving around forest-lined country lanes at dusk in a notoriously dangerous region? No one knows, says chief investigator Shakrai. Could it be a pretext to ensure the Russian presence never leaves the strategic Caucasus region? Investigations continue . . .

Liam McDowall

Liam McDowall works for Associated Press

LETTER FROM THE TRANSVAAL

I crossed the Tropic of Capricorn on an afternoon heavy with the promise of the first rains. Clouds crashed and tumbled far above and the bushveld took on a morbid grey colour. The mopane trees and thornbush clung to a land baked and parched from the months of drought. Only far to the west could I see glimmerings of light edging out from behind the great masses of cloud. There were mountains there, strange volcanic shapes that hugged the horizon, and beyond them, the vast arid plains of Botswana.

This land, which stretched beyond the invisible line of the tropic, was tamer in appearance now than it must have been when the wagons of the first Voortrekkers rolled forward 158 years ago. The lions and leopards, the buffalo and elephant that roamed here were gone, safe only in the confines of the game reserves. And the bush itself, though still vast and beautiful, had surely been of wilder appearance. No fences then, no telephone poles, not even the solitary wisps of smoke from distant farmhouses.

I began to think of those old escapists with their bibles and their guns, their blind moral certainty and acute desire to be free of the civilised corruptions of the British empire. They had come this way under the leadership of a man named Louis Trichardt. Of him we know little, other than that he came from the eastern Cape, where the British had placed a price on his head for treason. There is one photograph of Louis Trichardt. The face is that of the Boer patriarch: solemn, stern and dependable. His party of trekkers comprised—in his own words—"seven households and 46 souls and only nine able shots". They left the Cape in search of a land where they could be free from the interfering British.

"I hate the blacks, I hate the kaffirs," said my guide. If he could, he would kill Nelson Mandela

To men like Trichardt, the British were at best meddlesome, at worst treacherous and malign. But much as the British infuriated the Boers, there was another, more vital force at work: the fear that unless they quit the Cape they would lose their identity. Then as now, the preservation of the Volk was imperative. Trichardt trekked north and then east into malaria-ridden swamps; he and most of his supporters died proving their determination to be separate. Not long after arriving in the area whose main town bears his name, I was hearing echoes of that bloody-minded determination.

Just outside the town there is a museum based on the site of the original Trekker settlement. Here they have recreated the mud cottages of Trichardt's time. There are ancient ox-wagons and old Dutch bibles which were excavated at the scene. My guide introduced himself as Ferdi. He was an amiable giant of a man who went out of his way to show me around. At the end, I asked him the inevitable question: what did he think of the way things were going? At this, the genial guide became the angry demagogue. "Look here," he said, pulling up his shirt and showing two great purple stripes on the skin, "that is where I was shot and blown up on the border." He had been in an army unit operating deep inside Angola in a war that claimed the life of his brother. Being wounded meant a limp for life and the end of his military career. After that there was the freelance security work which had brought him here as supervisor to a team of black guards. "I hate the blacks, I hate the kaffirs," exploded Ferdi. He told me that his child had been kidnapped by black robbers and rescued by police. The experience had left him distraught. He assured me that if he could he would kill Nelson Mandela. Then he regained his composure, smiled and handed me a pamphlet on the history of the Voortrekkers. "Please enjoy South Africa," he said as he waved goodbye.

Driving back to town in a mood of considerable gloom, I noticed the spire of the Dutch Reformed Church rising high above the shops and banks and civic offices.This church, which rejected apartheid only a few years ago, was as good a place as any to seek out a reasoned voice. To my intense relief, I found it in the person of Dominee (minister) Gerhard Botha. He showed me into his study with an offer of coffee and an assurance that he had plenty of time to talk.

I asked if the town was as conservative as I imagined. "It is not only conservative, I would say very AWB," he said with a smile. He described how he walked a tightrope in his sermons, preaching social justice and equality, but carefully avoiding party politics. Yet Gerhard Botha was no liberal in the western sense. His mores were conservative, and he had traditional views about duty to God and country. It was his definition of country that made him different. It was neither the place of ultimate escape envisioned by Louis Trichardt, nor the white homeland demanded by the white right, nor Ferdi's place of war. It was an unknown country, where the colour of a man's skin ceased to be the definition of his worth.

At this hour of growing fear in South Africa, I simply do not know which voice of Afrikanerdom will be pre-eminent in the days ahead—that of Ferdi or Gerhard Botha. Let me leave you with the words of the celebrated Afrikaner novelist Andre Brink. "Such a long journey ahead," he wrote, "not a question of imagination but of faith."

Fergal Keane

Fergal Keane is a BBC correspondent in southern Africa. "Letter from Louis Trichardt" will be on Radio 4 at 9.45am on 13 August and at 6.15pm on 15 August

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For British National Party leaders, all history culminates in the struggle against the Jews, says **Tim Hepple** in his second report from inside BNP headquarters

The Reich stuff

One thing that surprised me while working at the BNP shop was the way in which everything was seen in terms of the Third Reich and Nazism. Of course the Holocaust was an important part of this fascination, with the gory details of concentration camp history, but it soon became clear why Nazism and the Holocaust occupied the minds of the BNP leadership. The view of Richard Edmonds' [the man who runs the BNP on a day-to-day basis] was simply that the Holocaust was a moral battering ram against the white race. "The Jews can now turn around and say: down you dogs, down, because Britain and Europe failed to subject themselves to Jewish domination." Edmonds was the prime mover behind the publication of *Holocaust News* in 1987. At the heart of the matter for John Morse [a leading BNP activist] and Edmonds was the belief that only the Holocaust stood in the way of a Nazi revival in Britain. No activist in the BNP was allowed to work with Morse and Edmonds unless he felt in 100 per cent agreement with the Holocaust denial line.

Edmonds had a clever line of argument. He would start off by using the first world war as an example of "racial fratricide that nobody can explain" and then moved on into evidence that the second world war was fought for the same reason as the first, entirely for the purposes of creating "Zionist domination" of the world. Part of this fiendish plan was the "myth of the Holocaust" whereby the Jews would always have the whip hand in moral terms over everyone else because they had suffered the most.

Edmonds' filing cabinets are stuffed full of Holocaust denial material, while the bookshelves in the shop are weighed down by "conspiracy theory" books by Captain Ramsey and Nesta Webster, and Holocaust denial books by Butz, the IHR and Fred Leuchter. For Edmonds, all history culminates in the struggle against the Jews and their lies but, unlike many sympathisers, he is not prepared just to listen to tapes of storm trooper marches and relive the glory days of the Reich. He wants to create the New Order today and his model is the Third Reich. He is prepared to live a barren existence at the Welling shop in order to bring the New Order into reality.

His wife, Jennifer, is an Oxford graduate with a first in history, and was part of the Oxford University Monday Club. She is an intelligent woman and, although she accepts that the Holocaust is a lie, she is totally pigged off with the Jewish obsession of her husband and more particularly John Morse. She often flew into a rage when Morse talked endlessly of the Third Reich as being "the only example of the kind of state we want to create" and gave various examples of Jewish conspirators in 20th-century history. "The BNP is nothing more than a bunch of Jew-obsessed losers," was one of her more lucid comments. She railed against the nonsense of the hardcore writings of various racist writers like Ben Klassen, whose book *Nature's Eternal Religion* is one long anti-Jewish diatribe. She hated [BNP leader] John Tyndall who, like Morse, had a Jew obsession. "He's just a pompous old windbag."

Living at the Welling HQ cannot be easy for either of the Edmonds. At night, the place is very cold and an eerie silence reigns over the building. There is the constant threat of attack, the bare furnishings and, more than anything else, absolutely squalid conditions. For a movement that claims to believe in high standards of cleanliness and strict organisation, the BNP HQ is a disgrace. The dust, before I got there, was inches thick, and I filled four plastic sacks of useless rubbish before even attempting to tidy up the actual office part of the building. During my cleaning up operations, I found bags of money, enquiries from the public, old BNP files, leaflets and a fax machine, which I soon fixed up. I couldn't believe the state the place was in, and I was amazed that any progress could be made under these conditions.

However, Alf Waite from Bromley, a long-time BNP activist and Tyndall loyalist, came in twice a week for five hours at a time to act as chief administrator. He had some sort of system working, and he would deal with enquiries and day-to-day matters with my help. Nevertheless, his efforts met with unanimous disapproval from BNP units, because he kept all the new enquiries back at his house and never sent them to BNP representatives.

Waite was also a tediously slow worker and terrible on the phone. He didn't seem to have the faintest idea about party activities and was only able to carry on in his role as party administrator because of his marsupial relationship with Tyndall. He slagged off the skinhead presence within the BNP and, much to Edmonds' chagrin, constantly harped on about the good old days of the second world war, when he had been in the navy "fighting the Jerries". Here was yet another antifederalist right-wing Tory who had joined the BNP in the mistaken belief that it was in any way "British". With friends like Alf Waite and Jennifer Edmonds, who needs enemies?

At times I had to play the role of the loyal

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BNP leader Richard Edmonds at the Welling HQ. The police, he thinks, are run by Jews

party lap dog, running down to the local Co-op to do the Edmonds' shopping. No wonder Edmonds looks so unfit. He lives on a diet of meat and beans, toast, cheese and tea. He also has a penchant for eating whole lemons. My vegetarianism had to go on hold at the HQ and it was very difficult to live on a daily meat and bean diet. I had to spend what money I had on fruit, just to take away the taste and to eat something healthy for a change.

I would be sent down to the Co-op with a big bag of letters and parcels to be mailed to Britain's Nazis, and afterwards I would trudge around the food hall buying the fixed quota of six tins of meat and beans, a lump of mature cheddar and four litres of UHT milk.

After a meal at midday, Edmonds and I would work in the shop until around six. Then we would leave the building and go off to the van, which was constantly moved around neighbouring streets in order to prevent vandalism and attack.

We would travel down Upper Wickham Lane on to the main road to Plumstead station, where we would often pick up Dale Baker and Paul Williams. The latter was an out-and-out Nazi who wore a swastika badge at all times. His main concern in life seemed to be collecting every book he could get hold of about the Third Reich and its leaders. His main interest was in the military aspects of the Third Reich. He was a very intense, moody character, but a fanatic nevertheless. He worked shifts at a mental hospital but I never found out where. I assumed from what he said that his job was to transport patients around and to restrain the violent elements.

Next we would pick up my skin girlfriends from the Greyhound pub in Woolwich. On occasions we would pick up a good number from here: Kerry, Lee, Liz, Eddy and various of their friends. About 20 skinheads live in the Woolwich area. Some, like Kerry and her family, live on the Abbey Wood estate, a couple of miles down the road. Others live in Thamesmead. The Woolwich and Bexleyheath area has always been very strong in skinhead terms, and thugs like Dale Baker ("swastika head") straddled the gap between the British Movement days of old and the BNP of today. At the BM's height, over 400 skins were active in the BM in south-east London. A lot of these guys, now around 30 years old, still hold to their old beliefs and get involved with the BNP on an on-off basis. Some of them drink at the Abbey Arms. Quite a few are taxi-drivers. I unfortunately managed to recruit three of them to the BNP after a taxi ride in March, when my driver asked me if I knew where "the BNP gaff" was. I told him who I was—it was rather obvious with the number three haircut and the Nazi T-shirt! After that, he was a regular visitor to the HQ.

Conveniently enough, Ian Dell lived in a block of flats over the road from the Greyhound in Woolwich. We picked him and his wife Gabi up on most trips into London, They have split up now, I understand, because Gabi refused to obey the "master of the house" at all times and in all places. Dell and Edmonds go back a long way and have been involved in numerous criminal activities: the smashing of the Mandela statue on the South Bank, the distribution of illegal Nazi material in south London, the Friends Meeting House débâcle, and so on. Dell just keeps on popping up—at Bermondsey during the 1991 riot and at the battle of Waterloo last year. When I met him in February 1992 for the first time he had been released from prison for knocking down a pedestrian after the van he was driving went out of control.

On we would travel to Greenwich and then we would pick up Jim White, either from his place in SE8 or at Surrey Quays tube station. There we would meet Steve Tyler, Darren Parker and any east Londoners who had turned up. Quite often, and especially during the month-long election campaign, a carload or two of the Croydon scum would meet us there as well. Jim White was total scum, a convinced Nazi and apologist for Loyalist terrorists. I found White the most nauseating specimen I encountered in the BNP. He thought he knew it all, and seemed to be under the impression that Bermondsey was already "in the bag" for the BNP.

White was Steve Tyler's election agent and lap dog. They had already conducted a campaign in Camberwell recently and obtained a respectable 6.5 per cent of the votes in a borderline area. To a great extent, the failure of the BNP to reap the harvest of the August 1991 Nazi riots in Bermondsey and bring in a decent vote for Tyler was White's fault. He concentrated all our efforts in the estates around the Blue market and failed to campaign in the new BNP areas up near London Bridge and Waterloo. He also focused on large paper sales in the Blue market and futile postering efforts in and around Bermondsey. He seemed to think that the whole of Bermondsey was waiting for the new messiahs of the BNP to turn up and that would be it. Of course, this was not the case. Bermondsey is a racist area, but probably more a criminal area with a very high death rate. Local people are more bothered about issues like crime and gang warfare, but White, as coordinator, failed to address this central concern. His failure and the tactical incompetence of Tyndall meant that we failed to hold either an election rally or a march—the constituency was too big. In my opinion, it is in local council elections where the BNP can do most damage, where it is free to put up a candidate and easy to do two or three leaflet drops within a week and present an image of strength—an idea dear to Nazi hearts.

White was a vicious bastard, but a heavy drinker and totally unfit. On one occasion in Bermondsey an old black man stuck his head out of his front door and tore up the recently delivered BNP leaflet. White's response shows the true Nazi mind at work: "You, nigger, get back into your kennel—in, in you bastard, you're finished in Britain, finished." What a performance. It was at times like these that I knew I was doing the right thing working for *Searchlight*. On this occasion, I said it was a waste of time arguing with black people or abusing them, we should just take no notice. "Look Tim, let's get one thing straight, they're not people, they're animals, scum," White replied.

Tim Hepple was formerly a member of the BNP, but became disillusioned and volunteered to work as a mole for "Searchlight"

INFLUENCES

KEN LOACH
Film-maker

What books and authors have had the greatest influence on your political beliefs?
Books by Christopher Hill, and Edward Thompson; various accounts of 1917.

Name one film, one book, one play, one poem and one song or piece of music you would most like everyone to see, read or hear.
Film: John Pilger's and David Munro's films on Vietnam.
Book: Isaac Deutscher's biography of Leon Trotsky.
Play: Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*
Poem: Wilfred Owen's war poems; John Clare: "I am—yet what I am none cares or knows . . . "; and Bertolt Brecht: "And I always thought: the simplest of words/Must suffice. When I say what things are like/It will rend the hearts of all./That you go down if you don't fight/Is surely clear to you."
Music: Bach's Double Violin Concerto; Schubert's Impromptus; the songs of Christy Moore and Dick Gaughan.

In the early stages of your life, which figure stands out as an important influence on you?
S R Brett, a history master.

What event during your lifetime has had the greatest effect on your political beliefs?
The 1984-85 miners' strike.

Which political figure, living or dead, do you most admire?
James Connolly; Rosa Luxemburg. Of British contemporaries, Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn.

If you could visit any time in history for 24 hours, which would you choose?
The Putney Debates in the English civil war.

What do you consider the greatest threat at present to individual freedom and liberty?
The United States of America.

On important matters, whose opinion—other than your own—do you trust most?
Jim Allen; Tony Garnett; Alan Thornett; Don Grant; writers and friends with whom I work; Lesley Loach. I was interested in Norman Willis' curious answer to this same question: "Arthur Scargill". Where were you during the strike, Norman?

Who is the greatest prime minister we never had?
No individual prime minister can deal with society's problems until the party of the left has a different political base. However, Tony Benn would set an interesting agenda.

If you could pass one law, what would it be?
The implementation of Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution: "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain, the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

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Pitch battles: a selection of the irreverent, humorous fanzines getting results at the end of the day by winding-up chairmen and incompetent centre-forwards throughout the land

As the football season starts, **Nick Hornby** looks at the fanzines—proof that not all supporters are Nazis on Special Brew

Kick up the grass

When I was young, the football photos I liked best were those that showed both players and crowd. I have even kept one or two of them: there's one (Arsenal vs Stoke City, September 1972, cut out of the *Sunday Express*) that shows Ray Kennedy being congratulated by his team-mates, and an ecstatic North Bank behind him, a forest of raised arms. You don't get many good ones like this. Sports editors on the quality papers seem to prefer pictures of the players in action: it is hard to capture on film the violence and beauty of the game, and photographers are understandably pleased when they have managed to do so. I suspect, however, that fans aren't bothered about these; on the whole, we prefer the shots the tabloids use, of wild-eyed players celebrating in front of their adoring public.

It is not just that this is our moment, and that these photos are as much about us as about them. It is more that football, above all sports, is about teams *and* fans. Ryan Giggs of Manchester United is breathtakingly talented, and his talent would be just as remarkable if he played in front of three men and a dog every Saturday afternoon. The fact that he plays at Old Trafford in front of 40,000 people, however, *validates* that talent. The people who pay to watch Giggs are extras, a vital component of the football experience.

All this is by way of saying that fanzines, the homemade magazines written for fans by fans and sold for the most part outside grounds, are the literary equivalent of those crowd-shot photos. Before the mid-1980s, the majority of football writing was about the game itself, and, though valuable and enjoyable, somehow missed the point. Fanzines have widened the focus, and so for the first time the true mystery and glory of football—the way it is consumed, the way it means so much to so many people—came to be properly articulated. Anyone who has ever wondered why, say, fans of Stockport County travel the length and breadth of the country to watch a no-hope team won't find the answer in the sports pages of newspapers; fanzines shed light where previously there was only bemused incomprehension.

The timing of the birth of fanzines was significant. Post-Heysel, with Mrs Thatcher hell-bent on introducing her risible and (as Lord Justice Taylor was to argue) positively dangerous ID scheme, gates falling, crowd

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trouble at its peak and the quality of soccer in a trough, English football was closer even than it is now to giving up the ghost altogether. Those fans who still bothered to attend games—especially those fans who attended games unarmed—were depressed to the point of surrender. Then came a rough-and-ready (typed, photocopied, crudely illustrated) fanzine called *When Saturday Comes*; it was angry, funny, impassioned and intelligent, and before very long more or less every professional and semi-professional football club in England had some sort of equivalent. Arsenal has four different fanzines; Manchester City five; even Wycombe Wanderers has two. There is *Brian Moore's Head* at Gillingham, *Flippin' Heck Ref, That Was A Foul, Surely* at Waterlooville, *Who Is Dougie Henry?* at East Stirlingshire, *Revenge of the Killer Penguin* at Bath. Not since punk in the late 1970s has there been such a channelling of amateur energy.

The stereotype of football fans as Nazis on Special Brew still lingers, but most fanzines contain that *Private Eye* mixture of satire and gossip. Very few of them are offensive in the slightest; only Manchester United's *Red Issue* has let the side down with its noxious bully-boy pub talk. A letter in an early issue of *When Saturday Comes* arguing that Christina Rossetti must have been an Arsenal fan ("certainly she never made the disastrous error of her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who, in 1862, moved to Chelsea, where not surprisingly he became ill and suffered a nervous breakdown") is not *entirely* typical of fanzine wit or half-time terrace banter; on the other hand, more of us understood it than Mrs Thatcher would have believed.

Fanzines were born because football clubs treat their fans as if they are idiots. There was a time when fans didn't really mind: football was cheap to watch, and of a comparatively high quality. In the early 1970s, you could watch Best and Marsh, Moore and Charlton, Greaves and George for 25p—15p for kids—and if the view wasn't so good, or the weather foul, it seemed churlish to complain. Now, however, football has brought itself into line with other forms of mass entertainment, and a day out with the kids at Highbury or Old Trafford costs the same as a day at Alton Towers or Chessington. Seats are £10, programmes a couple of quid, and clubs expect their fans to stump up this sort of dosh 20 or 30 times a season. There's more. Replica shirts cost £30, and are deliberately redesigned and relaunched every couple of years to generate more income. You now need to buy a satellite dish to see Premier League games live on television. And, two years ago, Arsenal and West Ham launched their infamous bond schemes, where fans were asked to pay large sums—well over £1,000 in Arsenal's case—*for the right to buy a ticket.*

Peculiarly, some of the more vocal and articulate fans began to express dissent, and fanzines have become a natural home for these dissenters. Some clubs have even been known to listen on occasions. When West Ham fans invaded the pitch to protest at their bond scheme the season before last, it was the fanzine editors who were invited into the boardroom to put their point of view. Tottenham fanzines have been active in their support for Terry Venables in his battle against Alan Sugar, and have met with Venables several times to help plot his defence; Sunderland chairman Bob Murray has spoken to fanzine editors about his new stadium plans.

The more typical reaction from the clubs, however, is a mixture of suspicion and contempt. Tony Willis, editor of Arsenal fanzine *One-Nil Down, Two-One Up*, has been sued by Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein. Another Arsenal fanzine editor was arrested inside the ground for selling copies of *The Arsenal Echo Echo*. Stan Flashman, the huge, intimidating Barnet chairman and "ticket broker", is reported to have expressed his displeasure with one of Barnet's fanzines in a manner that brooked little contradiction. And some players have been unhappy: Swindon's centre-forward sought out the editor of *Bring the Noise* for a frank exchange of views after an unflattering article.

In the end, of course, it doesn't amount to an awful lot. A few sheets of folded A4 and a couple of staples cannot compete with the might of the FA Carling Premiership; football will continue on its path to sponsored oblivion whatever *Brian Moore's Head* says. And there is a sense that some of the vitality of the fanzine movement has dissipated a little over the past couple of years. "The standard has gone down a little," admits *When Saturday Comes'* co-editor Bill Brewster, whose magazine now has a circulation of 40,000 and is available from any branch of John Menzies. "It's like punk in 1979—a lot of the original people have moved on, and the imitators aren't quite as good. But the principal thing about fanzines is that they exist."

The lasting influence of fanzines is more likely to be found in the media than on the pitch or in the boardroom. The popular Radio 5 *The Six-O-Six Show* is an aural equivalent of a fanzine: fans phone up after their agonising Saturday afternoon entertainment and moan about their chairman or their pies or their useless centre-forward, and David Mellor—yes, the fan with the alarming attachment to his club replica kit—listens patiently. The *Independent* runs a weekly column called "Fans' Eye View". Even the *Mirror*'s Monday results section is entitled "Fanzine"—somewhat misleadingly, given that it is not put together by fans at all, but by tired old hacks. There is nearly as much money to be made out of the intelligent football fans as there is out of the dumb ones.

The fanzine movement that accompanied punk took a predictable course: within weeks, or so it seemed, the founder of *Sniffing Glue* was offered a job on the *NME* before moving on to *Give Us A Clue* and all sorts of terrible daytime TV programmes. So far, no Danny Bakers have emerged from the football fanzines (although Baker himself was the first and best host of *The Six-O-Six Show*), and it is unlikely that Andreas Whittam Smith or Andrew Neil will offer the editor of *Flipping Heck, Ref* his own column. Maybe that's for the best. Maybe it's best if they all stay put, all these funny, angry, occasionally barmy young men and women, doing what they do best: annoying chairmen, centre-forwards and all the other incompetents who conspire to ruin our Saturday afternoons.

Nick Hornby is author of "Fever Pitch" (Gollancz, £4.99)

We're Dead Men

—a Sarajevo resident quoted in "The Guardian"

We are dead men, said the spectre
In his uniform of skin;
We were in another sector
When the rockets hurtled in.

We were in another sector,
Where the flag was green as bile,
And the resident inspector
Did not know the way to smile.

When we heard the bullets rifling
Through our bodies like a thief,
There was barely air for stifling
Our expressions of relief.

There was barely air for stifling
All the victims at a swoop;
But they paused for questions, trifling,
All about our ethnic group.

There's a cordon, there's a haven,
There are envoys where we fall,
But their promises sound craven
Through each corridor and wall.

And their promises sound craven,
Like the slogans they repeat.
As we lie here, roughly shaven,
Underneath a dirty sheet.

In the Sarajevo gutters,
Far across the Golan Heights,
We can hear the camera shutters,
As the snipers check their sights.

We can hear the camera shutters,
And the voices by our head,
Including one that mutters
We are dead men, we are dead.

Bill Greenwell

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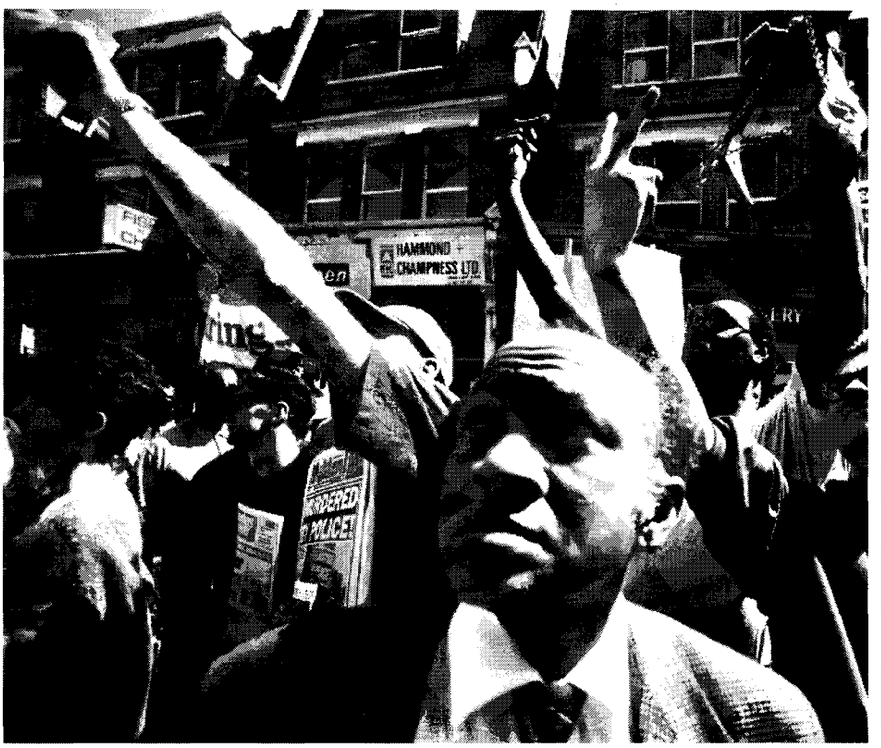
A woman of no importance—until after her death. **Sarah Baxter** wonders whether Joy Gardner's character is of any relevance

A death too far



Protestors brandish a body belt outside Hornsey police station. Police commissioner Paul Condon has described the restraining methods used on deportees as "abhorrent"

The Independent/Edward Sykes

Who was Joy Gardner? While she was alive, it really didn't matter. She was a black woman with a small child, living in an anonymous block of flats in Crouch End in north London, who was doing all she could to remain in obscurity in Britain. The immigration authorities thought she had few friends, no relations and a husband who wouldn't miss her.

But Joy Gardner had friends and she had a mother, Myrna Simpson, living in Britain. On Saturday, at the rally to commemorate Joy's death, her mother was near-hysterical with grief. She cried out, her hands outstretched: "They put buckles on her feet and tape across her mouth and things round her waist. They did horrible things to her and they strung her up in hospital and pretended she wasn't dead."

She continued as if in a trance: "The ambulancemen have got to talk. The doctors have got to talk. The policemen have got to talk. The immigration officials have got to talk. The coroner has got to talk. The pathologist has got to talk. Everybody has got to talk. My God says so."

Well, the ambulancemen have talked. Mrs Simpson's claims that her daughter was dead before she arrived at hospital, that she was "stinking" and decomposing as she lay in bed attached to a life-support machine, no longer seem quite as wild as they did. The London Ambulance Service has confirmed that they were called to Joy's flat at 8.04am, and that there were no "vital signs of life" when they arrived at 8.15am: no pulse, no eye movement, no breathing.

In the ambulance, on the way to the Whittington hospital, their efforts at resuscitation managed to produce a faint pulse. By then, nearly 40 minutes had passed since Joy appeared to have "died". For four days, an eerie bleep on the screens was her only sign of life. She may not have been decomposing, but a brain stem test confirmed that she was clinically dead. "Why did they not perform the test sooner?" asks Sharon Lawrence of the Joy Gardner campaign.

When Joy died has assumed great importance to those who knew her. To the outside world, it seems unlikely that hospital doctors would have participated in an elaborate and ghoulish conspiracy to pretend that she was alive in a coma. As long as Joy's heart was beating, they would have had a duty to try to save her. In any case, she died in police custody, no matter what the timing. But it matters desperately to her mother that the blame for her death rests squarely with the police and immigration officers who came to deport her. For Mrs Simpson, Joy died in her flat—and nowhere else.

Mrs Simpson asked the police officers to talk. Well, the London *Evening Standard* claims that three of them have now done so, through an "intermediary". The three officers—a woman detective sergeant and two plain-clothes constables—are all suspended officers from Scotland Yard's specialist deportation unit, SO1(3). The Metropolitan Police Federation and their solicitors have denied that they spoke to the newspaper or authorised anyone else to do so. The *Standard* has retorted: "We got the information in good faith and we stand by the accuracy of our report."

We cannot make a judgment as to the veracity of the *Standard's* claims, but in its version of events, the three officers displayed no remorse for their behaviour, not even a flicker of recognition that the use of a body belt with manacles and a two-inch wide Elastoplast gag might be considered barbaric. "It's not four-inch wide masking tape, as has been suggested," they were said to have protested. "It's perforated to enable breathing."

Be that as it may, the pathologists are now talking. On the same day as the *Standard's* report was published, the preliminary results of a post-mortem, conducted on behalf of Joy's family by Dr Iain West, showed that she died of suffocation. More tests are being carried out to establish how this happened.

If the *Standard* is to be believed, the three suspended officers were afraid "other officers at the flat [would] testify against them". The headline was: "Don't make us the scapegoat." Ever since the Metropolitan Police chief, Paul Condon, suspended the deportation squad, the Joy Gardner campaign has been hopeful that the ordinary police officers, who were present at the raid, would speak out.

The *Standard* has noted that solicitors for the three officers have not disputed the facts of their story. This is not surprising, as in common with most tabloid coverage of Joy Gardner's case, the article was largely an exercise in character assassination. Now that she is dead, who Joy was has become an obsession with the media.

The officers from SO1(3) were said by the *Standard* to have known that Joy was violent; that she had tried to kill her husband, Joseph Gardner; and that "even her own mother didn't want her at home because of her violent behaviour". The report also implied that she was mad: that she not only went into a violent frenzy, but that she stripped off to her pants in front of the squad. But the first reaction of deportees is very often to undress. It is a sane impulse, based on the hope that the police will not drag them naked through the streets.

Friends have been obliged to defend Joy's name. Nellie Sterling, whose foster child used to play with Joy's five-year-old son, Graham, said angrily at the rally: "Some say she was a drug addict. Some say she was a drunkard. Some say she was violent. But, let me tell you, Joy Gardner was a decent, respectable woman. We were not just friends. We were like mother and daughter." Mrs Simpson has been dazed and distressed by the

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claims. "We've got a press picking up rubbish from the gutter. We're from a family of policemen, teachers, lawyers and doctors. We're not rubbish," she said indignantly.

It is Joy's husband, Joseph Gardner, who claims to have been battered by her. When married, he took out two court injunctions forbidding her from coming within two miles of his home. Last weekend, in an interview with the *Mail on Sunday*, he claimed that she had tried to gas him. The paper will not say whether they paid him for this information. However, the ITV programme, *London Tonight*, can confirm that he was unwilling to be interviewed by one of their reporters without payment. He also told a news agency in their reporter's hearing: "I'm not willing to say anything for less than £5,000."

There is no reason to believe that Joseph Gardner is lying. The evidence that he was maltreated predates his wife's death. But Joy is in no position to give her side of the story. This has not deterred the *Mail on Sunday* from asserting that her character and personality called into question "attempts by left-wing agitators to portray her as a martyr of police brutality". This is a well-tried diversionary tactic. What matters is not how Joy lived, but how she died.

The Home Office is doing all it can to resist the calls for a public inquiry. Its reasoning is simple. A public inquiry would not only bring the facts of Joy's death into the open, but also the rules governing deportations. It is only

It seems unlikely that hospital doctors would have participated in a ghoulish conspiracy to pretend she was alive

when a tragedy happens that we learn anything about them. Joy could have been shackled, gagged and thrown out of the country without anybody knowing. How many people has this happened to?

We know of one Nigerian woman, Dorothy Nwokedi, who has complained of her treatment to the British Council of Churches. And an aid worker has recalled seeing a man with his arms strapped to his sides, on a plane to West Africa. But most illegal immigrants and overstayers spend their lives trying to be invisible. Once deported, they disappear entirely from view.

Unusually for a senior police officer, Paul Condon has shown a commendable determination to open immigration policy to public scrutiny. He has won the respect of the black community for acting promptly to suspend the specialist deportation squad and calling for the police complaints authority investigation to have an independent element.

Immigration control is a dirty business, but the Home Office wants us to believe it is carried out humanely. To preserve this myth, it has allowed Joy Gardner's name to be dragged through the mud, instead of letting her rest in peace and dignity.

It's so much quicker and easier to deport people nowadays. **Robin Cohen** on the figures, the pressures, and the loss of parliamentary protection

The number of deportations has increased significantly since 1979 (see below), but the figures have been obscured by Home Office records, which divide people required to leave the UK into 29 categories. A small percentage is deemed to have departed "voluntarily", although the word has to be taken with a pinch of salt. "Volunteers" are threatened with detention and the prospect of having their passports endorsed, so that they are never allowed back into Britain. Thousands of deportees do not even enter the statistics, never getting beyond the holding pens at British ports of entry.

Behind the rise in deportations are three important shifts in attitude, accompanied by parallel administrative and legal changes.

First, Home Office ministers have shown increased determination to execute a deportation order, even where adverse publicity follows. In the 1980s, the Sri Lankan activist, Viraj Mendis; the Cypriot couple, Vassilis and Katarina Nicola, who sought sanctuary in a London church; and Afia Begum, whose case was championed by feminists after her marriage broke down, were all deported despite high-profile defence campaigns.

Second, the new managerialism that pervades our public services has led to pressure on the Home Office to improve its score on the deportation "performance indicator". Under new powers granted by the 1988 Immigration Act, immigration officers can instantly deport alleged illegal immigrants, instead of leaving them in jail for 14 days for all the formalities to be completed.

The rights of MPs to intervene in deportation cases have also been severely curtailed. Before 1987, they could use the "stop" procedure, initiated in the 1960s, whereby a removal direction was delayed pending representations by an MP and further consideration by a Home Office minister. Additionally, MPs could ask the minister to allow entry "outside the immigration rules".

In 1985, David Waddington, then a Home Office minister, experimented with obliging MPs to intervene in port-of-entry cases within 24 hours. With the assistance of refugee and immigrant welfare groups, MPs swung into action to beat the deadline, only to find that the Home Office was not able to respond as quickly. The experiment was abandoned after only two weeks.

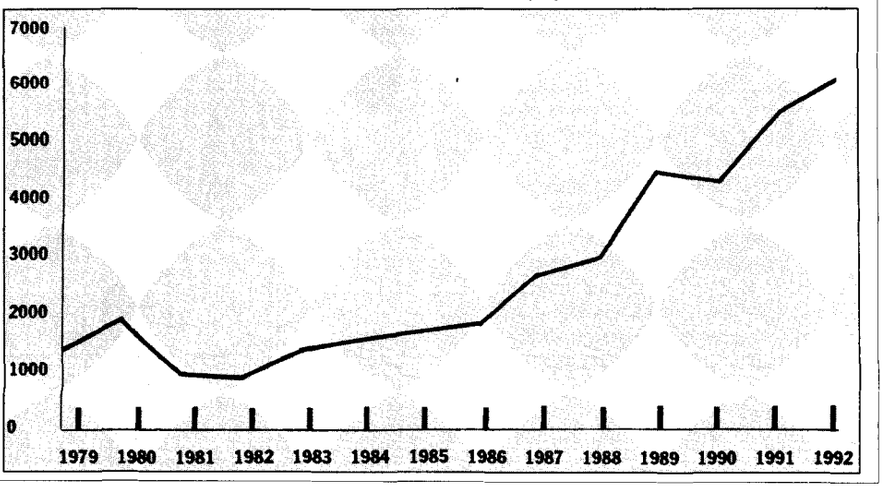
Rattled by this fiasco and the continuing flow of correspondence (in 1986, the number of representations by MPs reached 17,511), Waddington accused politicians of abusing the system. He finally succeeded in halting the grant of an automatic "stop" in cases where visas had been required and where there was "a clear attempt to seek entry through clearly bogus applications for asylum". The minister's mailbag was lighter by nearly 6,000 letters after this ruling.

The 1988 Act went on to limit severely the availability of appeals for immigrants and asylum seekers. Overstayers who had been in the UK for less than seven years were denied the right of appeal. By then, the government was losing patience with the courts, as much as the politicians. Home Office minister Timothy Renton referred to the legal system as a "thicket within which the immigrant is well protected. He goes from one appeal to the next while the years drag on. At the end, after eight or nine years it is almost inevitable that he will be given leave to remain in Britain."

One effect of trying to streamline removals was that the police became much more involved in immigration matters. A joint raid with immigration officers at British Petroleum's London headquarters in 1989 turned up 39 allegedly illegal cleaners, who were instantly deported.

That many senior police officers dislike their assigned role as enforcers of deportation orders is demonstrated by Metropolitan Police chief Paul Condon's immediate suspension of the specialist deportation squad. As long as police are involved in tracing, interviewing, arresting and often forcibly removing alleged illegal entrants, community relations programmes, according to one officer, are "dead in the water".

Robin Cohen is professor of sociology at the University of Warwick



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Nyta Mann sleeps among gin-sozzled Tories, tea-towel junkies and royalist eccentrics waiting to storm Buckingham Palace

At Her Majesty's pleasure

It could have happened to anyone, really. I didn't mean to queue up outside Buckingham Palace all night; I went to the Mall only to gawk at those who thought it was worth doing. But before long, the infectious camaraderie of a people bonded together by a common mania had me thinking that joining in this exercise in the twin British passions of queueing and the royal family might, after all, be an enjoyable thing to do.

There weren't even all that many of them there. "Don't come!" Palace staff had been warning all week. "It will be absolute chaos when you can't all get in." By 10pm on the evening before the Palace doors opened, however, only 30 or so people had bothered to camp out along the grassy verge that ran down the Mall, their garden chairs and sleeping bags forming a raggedy annexe to London's poshest address.

But what the queue lacked in quantity, it made up for in eccentricity. There was Stephen, an otherwise normal 42-year-old stock controller from Putney, who had brought along the choicest exhibits from his royal tea-towel collection, in the hope of finding someone to swap with. "I haven't come across one fellow enthusiast yet," he fretted. "I haven't come here for that, though. I want to make history and be first round the palace, but I always take up the opportunity to expand my portfolio, as it were. It's like a hobby." With a flourish, he draped his Birth of Beatrice brushed cotton-commemoration design across the seat of his deckchair. "A rarity, that is. And you know what?" he leaned forwards and lowered his voice. "It's a bootleg. Still fetch you a fiver from some, though. I don't suppose you're interested?"

Further up the queue was Laura, a 28-year-old American living in London, and one of the few foreigners attending the vigil. "I love the royal family, they're decent, nice people—not at all like the Kennedys. Look," she said, pulling out of her bag some unfocused photographs of what looked like a rosebush wearing a hat. They were of the Queen Mother, she assured me.

An even more prized object was her Marks and Spencer Royal scrapbook, dog-eared from constant handling. Laura turned the pages, filled with cuttings and her own line drawings of the nation's favourite great-grandmother.

"This one I did last week, I think it's my favourite at the moment." Suddenly, she raised the book to her face and nestled the sketch against her cheek. "I love her!" she exclaimed.

Misguided, but essentially harmless, these royalists, I was thinking by this stage. And then David, a plummily spoken research clerk in his fifties, joined the queue. "The whole event is just marvellous," he enthused. "I only live nearby, so I could just come along tomorrow morning, but one doesn't want to miss the spirit of the occasion, does one?" He had travelled light, bringing only sandwiches and some ready-mixed gin and tonic for the long night ahead.

Describing himself as a "true blue Conservative and a deep, deep supporter of the royal family", he perched himself on the edge of the grass verge to bemoan the decline of today's society as he sipped from his tonic bottle.

Just before 3am, the spirit of the occasion overtook him. After relieving himself in the St James's Park royal duck pond, 50 yards away from the queue, he removed his jacket, shirt, trousers and shoes, leaving only his underpants and socks on, and staggered over to a sleeping bag, which he then spent ten minutes struggling to get into. Unfortunately, it wasn't his sleeping bag and its owner was already in it. Twenty minutes later, David was arrested crawling along the pavement of the Mall. "Next time, try a bit more tonic and a bit less gin," a police officer advised the true blue Conservative as he was driven away in a police van.

Min Cooper

"What a show, and him a Tory too! We're not all like that, love," a fellow camper, knitting the night away, explained. "He's missed getting in the Palace now. He'll regret that in the morning." I wondered if the Queen knew what sort of people she was letting into her favourite home.

After an excited night's sleep, the queue awoke at 6am. By now it straggled halfway down the Mall, with the more sensible foreign tourists having decided to join it in the morning. Up at the front, the veterans readied themselves for their royal appointment, shaking the creases out of their Union Jacks, taking the curlers out of their hair, and doing knee-bends in the early morning sun. Giving his tea towels one last fold, Stephen started singing "Land of Hope and Glory".

As opening time approached and the media arrived, the previous night's bonhomie disappeared. Grumblings ran down the line as a *Sunday Telegraph* reporter pushed in. "Don't interview him, he bombed our chippy in the war!" someone called out as breakfast television filmed a German tourist. "You just try getting in up this end mate," a man dressed in red, white and blue threatened to Screaming Lord Sutch, who had come along for the photo-opportunity.

Tragedy struck at 8.45am—15 minutes before the ticket kiosk was due to open—when the Royal Parks Constabulary ordered Laura to unchain her bicycle from the palace railings and park it at Victoria, half a mile away. Fighting back the tears, she cycled unsteadily away. There was no sign of her by the time the kiosk opened its shutters to loud cheers, and amid much jostling, the by now great unwashed bustled forwards clasping their £8 each. This, finally, was it.

After a hard night's queueing, all were determined to be awestruck. "It's wonderful . . . does She actually sit in that chair? . . . not as many chaises-longues as I thought there would be . . . I bet that's a famous painting." The greatest enthusiasm, however, was reserved for the souvenir gift shop. Housed in a posh Portakabin, it was more like a garage sale held by the well-to-do as an undignified scrabble of visitors searched for the purchase that would best testify to their fleeting presence there. I left them as they debated the merits of the official Buckingham Palace "desk tidy" (£45, and in the shape of the palace itself) compared with the palace-approved silk tie (£25 in a paisley-style pattern).

On the way out, I asked a police officer if he knew what happened to David after his arrest last night. "I couldn't tell you, madam, simply because we took quite a few in from the queuers last night. You wouldn't think it of this sort, would you?" There are bigger headaches for the Queen than tabloid excesses, undisciplined in-laws and public disaffection. After all, with devoted subjects like hers, who needs republicans?

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The rise of the party poopers

After the humiliation of the Tories, the next important test of public opinion will be the June elections to the European parliament. For once, Labour and the Conservatives could be fighting on a level playing field, as the press is not going to be reliably pro-Tory and both parties are in the same state of decrepitude.

Motivating Tory loyalists has never been much of a problem in the past. Canvassing at election time is considered a small price to pay for the enjoyable social life that comes with being a Conservative. There are fetes and coffee mornings for the women, beer and snooker for the men, and all the while the opportunity to mix a little business with pleasure.

But just as the voters were unwilling to admit their preference for a Tory government to pollsters, it now seems that belonging to the Conservatives is no longer something to be proud of. The *Sunday Telegraph* reported last weekend that the party's financial crisis has led dozens of Conservative agents to be laid off. To the alarm of Conservative Central Office, their numbers are down from 299 at the general election to 234.

As Sir Norman Fowler rightly pointed out in a letter to local party chairmen, these figures still leave the Tories with many more agents than Labour and the Lib Dems combined. However, not even these party chairmen can be relied on to be enthusiastic local activists. Many of them are dejected county councillors, who found themselves humiliatingly ejected from power in May this year. They are in no mood to do much to help their European candidates.

Many grassroots Conservative Party members regard themselves as surprisingly apolitical. This comes over very strongly in Rupert Morris' book, *Tories: from village hall to Westminster*. Morris describes how a man who had just moved into the home counties was asked to come to a fund-raising barbecue by a neighbour. "Only if you're barbecuing Thatcher," he joked. "You can still come. You don't have to be political," replied his uncomprehending neighbour.

Without the drive and enthusiasm provided by party chairmen and agents, these "apolitical" Tories are drifting away from the party. It is difficult to establish whether or not they are remaining members, as the figures are kept locally and Conservative Central Office does not hold computerised records. But it is clear that they are no longer doing their bit for the party, or local associations would not be having to lay off agents. Agents' salaries are all paid for out of local funds, only a quarter of which are raised by subscriptions and donations. The rest comes from the endless round of voluntary activity, such as jumble sales, raffles and fetes, and these funds are drying up.

The Tory Euro-MPs, who are a breed apart from most Conservatives, are going to be very short of people to knock on doors on their behalf in June. It was never easy for them anyway. The MEP Lord Bethell, writing in *House* magazine a while back, gave a glimpse of the no-man's land in which he and his colleagues operate: "We are the nut in the nutcracker. At home we are seen by some of our fellow Conservatives at least as agents of sinister left-wing forces, whereas on the continent, we appear as right-wing nationalists and extremists, a wedge of English schoolboys aimed at the heart of Europe."

Labour will be able to contest the European elections on a reasonably united, pro-social chapter platform. Given the state of the Tories, they should be able to outstrip the 40 per cent share of the vote that they achieved in 1989. The party knows, however, that, in purely domestic terms, doing well in the European elections is not so very different to coming top of the opinion polls. Far more worrying for Labour is its poor performance in local by-elections.

Many Tory party members think themselves surprisingly apolitical and are drifting away

Sheer apathy and a low turn-out prevents the results of these by-elections from being distorted by much of a protest vote. The figures compiled by Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher of Plymouth University's local elections centre are sobering. Since the general election, the Lib Dems have gained 54 seats; the Tories have lost seven; and Labour has lost 30. Three of these seats were lost in Lambeth to the Lib Dems. It will be interesting to see how Labour performs there as a whole when the elections to the London boroughs take place next spring.

Labour did extremely badly in the metropolitan council elections shortly after the demoralising experience of the general election last year. It would not be too surprising if many of Labour's by-election losses were to date from that period. The truth, however, is that Labour has carried on losing right up until now. In last month's local by-elections, it gained four seats, but lost six, five of them to the Lib Dems. Against the backdrop of good opinion poll ratings, this has to be a reflection of the party's poor state of readiness and lack of enthusiasm.

The Labour Party lost many of its "apolitical" members in the early 1980s and became an activists' party. For years now, they too have been lapsing into inactivity. Patrick Seyd and Paul Whiteley, the authors of *Labour's Grassroots*, have just completed a follow-up survey to their book that reveals a steady pattern of decline. Last year, 49 per cent of party members said they were less active than the year before. Only 13 per cent said they were more active—and this was in a general election year.

The MP for Southampton Itchen, John Denham, has been unfairly criticised for recommending the adoption of Lib-Dem style pavement politics in a Tribune group paper. He was not suggesting that Labour should be mark two Liberal Democrats, but rather that activists need to feel they can do something positive for people. Too often, says Denham, the campaigning that does take place is propagandist rather than empowering. In the absence of a Labour government, there is not much point sloganising.

Gordon Brown has also just produced a paper called *Making Mass Membership Work*. Some of his arguments are similar to Denham's, although he does not deign to mention the Lib Dems by name. Party members, he argues, must show that they can help people now, and not just wait for a Labour government to do so. Being Gordon Brown, one of the issues that he suggests people can take up is whether the banks are supporting enough local businesses. But it is the same idea as Denham's, differently dressed up.

Brown's paper is also an extended argument for one member one vote. He needs the Labour Party to grow, so that it can be weaned off the trade unions. So long as it remains in the hands of a small band of white-collar, middle-class people, the unions will feel morally entitled to hang on to their power.

Hence Brown's support for the pilot membership scheme pioneered by Tony Blair's Sedgefield constituency, which replicates to some extent the Tories' "apolitical" model. People only pay what they can afford to join the party and make up the rest by fund-raising activities designed to recruit their neighbours to the cause. Locally, the scheme has been outstandingly successful: Sedgefield has a membership approaching 2,000. But the experience of the Conservatives shows that it is no substitute for making people proud to be a party member.

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SIDELINERS

John Major qualified for this journal's Neville Chamberlain "Peace in our Time" prize for bum prophecy when he insisted, on 2 August, that the final ratification of the Maastricht Treaty ended his party's civil war over European federalism by setting in concrete the "line drawn in the sand" by his cabinet. Unfortunately, the collapse of the ERM on the very same day opened a fissure into which dropped Maastricht's monetary core.

He also qualified for the Harold Wilson "Walter Mitty" award for personal back-patting by saying "I told you so" about describing the ERM's fault-lines last September. He conveniently forgot that, as chancellor, he had finally overcome Mrs Thatcher's objections and rushed into the ERM in October 1990 at an unsustainably high level. He also chose to forget that he had refused to revalue, and had uselessly wasted at least £2 billion in the last day to avoid Britain's expulsion from the ERM.

Because he rushed off for his Portuguese holiday, Major could not witness the renewal of the civil war he had declared at an end. Euro-federalists, led by Sir Edward Heath, insisted we had been wrong not to go immediately for a single Euro-currency, which could have held off the speculators. Lord (Geoffrey) Howe warned Eurosceptics against "dancing on the grave" of the ERM. Ignoring such warnings, Bill Cash demanded to know why the government had rushed to ratify the treaty on the day its guts had been torn out.

A few top Tories have recognised the danger of this resumed civil war. Replying to the vote of confidence debate, the Euro-pragmatic Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd held out an olive branch. He risked the wrath of his old boss, Edward Heath, by offering to discuss with Cash the Tory manifesto for next June's Euro-elections. Even before that vote forced back into line all Eurosceptics except funk-artist Rupert Allason, former Commons leader John Biffen quietly rejoined the government side. Somerset-born Biffen anticipated that, after Christchurch, continued civil war would lower further Tory middle-class support in the recession-hit south, ensuring the loss to the Lib Dems of two south-western Euro-seats next June.

Full-scale civil war over Euro-federalism will resume at the Tories' annual conference, with Mrs Thatcher's scorching memoirs and TV blockbuster scheduled to explode at the same time. Europe has to come into her charges of "treachery", because she gave her opponents their chance by openly breaking in the Commons her agreement with Douglas Hurd and Sir Geoffrey Howe over the EC's Rome summit. This precipitated Howe's resignation and blistering speech.

The preceding arguments at the Liberal Democrat and Labour conferences are likely to be tamer, only one Lib Dem MP, Nick Harvey, is strongly Eurosceptic. On Labour's side, John Smith, a Euro-enthusiast since 1971-72, has managed to smother the debate by manipulating the votes of his bloated frontbenchers and squeezing out Bryan Gould.

Andrew Roth

EDWARD PEARCE

Changes are in the air: Labour needs new blood in the shadow cabinet, and the Tories a new chairman

It does no harm with the Commons risen and the motor of party politics idling, to look forward to changes. After all, if our cricketers can get rid of Ted Dexter, there is no call for Norman Fowler to be immortal. The big difference as far as this metaphor goes, is that there are no Australians! It would be nice if Labour batted down to number nine; instead, the cricketing equivalent of Gordon Brown is probably Graeme Hick—brilliant early promise, not doing very much lately.

In Labour's case, the chance of change comes with the votes for the shadow cabinet in October. For this, the PLP has enjoined compulsory votes for four women, a piece of stupid authoritarianism, wrong as compulsion and wrong in terms of the political market, given the visible inadequacy of most of the women on Labour's current front bench.

Compulsory votes for four women for the shadow cabinet is a piece of stupid authoritarianism

The backbenches are not set against the sex; able women in the intake would achieve their day anyway, a little later and wiser. Premature promotions of the able rarely help the beneficiaries, and premature promotion of limited talents is a killing with kindness. Ann Taylor and Harriet Harman, neither negligible, have been pushed the one step too far by the imposition of requirement over even-handed judgment.

However, there are constructive ways of voting. Alun Michael, the quiet, grown-up deputy at Home Affairs, simply deserves a place in the shadow cabinet. His colleague in that strong team, Graham Allen, who bubbles with ideas (and runs parliamentary cricket) won't make it this time, but ought to bounce up the lists. This is a politician who hasn't grown bored and turned on the auto-pilot. Another eminently useful man, who may actually have a chance, is Henry McLeish, who stood in during the Tom Clarke hiatus and, in the view of his colleagues, stood in well.

If Labour were smart, the opportunity has come for a major transformation of the shadow cabinet. They have at the moment rather more talent to draw on than English cricket has. Alistair Darling, Nigel Griffiths and especially Brian Wilson are people as fitted for senior jobs as the names mentioned. There are first-rate intakers of the Hoon-Byers-Denham-Milburn sort, ready to fill up the ranks behind. And then there is George Robertson . . . It is inconvenient that so much talent is Scottish. Labour is somewhat excessively a Scottish party. But talent it is and a slight prejudice in favour of talent should be encouraged.

As for the Conservatives, they have one immediate problem, the party chairmanship. Ever since Sir Norman Fowler abandoned his family for that tribulation, he has had a hard time of it. Winning an election was not enough for the compulsively disloyal right-wing faction, which anyway had hoped to *lose* it. Normally, the Conservative chairmanship takes two forms: an early-in-the-parliamentary-season administrator who raises money and rakes over the organisation (never all that good, despite left-wing legend), and a late season boss chosen for his fighting, unfastidious, above-parapet qualities.

Sir Norman is a case of a reasonable type A chairman, precipitated by party disaffection and early by-election sensations into circumstances that cry out for something different. Not that type B, all abuse of the other side, scare tactics and emotional high, would suit them either.

What the Tories are looking for is type B(2), someone able to talk easily and pleasantly to the electorate, ready to listen and concede fault, someone who above all, tries to regain for an unpopular party of government making too many finger-snapping decisions, a human, conversational dimension.

Ever since he took it upon himself to save Oxleas Wood on the grounds that the public should not be ridden over by governments or experts, Steven Norris, the transport junior, has looked like the sort of attentive, responsive figure this government lacks. He is also a brilliant, self-derisive talker in exactly the low-keyed, humourous style missing from an assembly of pre-recorded ministerial voices.

However, as a mere parliamentary undersecretary, he will probably be overruled for procedural-bureaucratic reasons. Both oppositions should be quietly pleased that the day-to-day communications of the government are kept in the hands either of a cassette or a ranter instead of being given, dangerously, to a human being.

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LETTERS

Complaints from readers who believe that their letters are unfairly excluded from publication arrive with quite extraordinary regularity at just about every publication that runs a letters page—and this week at the New Statesman and Society has been no exception.

"I am a long-time reader of NSS," writes John Everett of Sheffield, "and I believe myself to be a socially concerned person. However, I find it difficult if not impossible to get any letters which I submit to your magazine into print. It seems that unless you share the entire mythology of the left you cannot get a hearing."

He goes on to say that, as a believer in "overall social direction if not control of the economy", he considers himself a socialist and thus generally supports the Labour Party. "Yet when I query the advisability of, say unlimited immigration into this country, I cannot obtain a hearing in left periodicals. Similarly, the question of homosexuality it seems is not open for discussion.

"My question here is: What has sex, deviant or otherwise, to do with politics? Overt support for homosexuality must lose the left much support that it might otherwise obtain. My proposition is to remove it from the agenda. There are certain things that are the prerogative of the individual, just as there are certain things that are the rightful concern of politics."

Everett has a point about the tendency of some parts of the left to unthinkingly endorse certain orthodoxies, disallowing deviant ideas for no reason other than they are deviant. But these letters pages are not guilty in this respect: letters are chosen on merit, with originality of argument and subject matter the most important criterion. There's certainly no conspiracy to ensure that only the famous, the politically correct and the friends of the editor monopolise the show.

Perhaps more importantly, Everett chooses two poor examples to illustrate what he sees as left intolerance. It is true that the case for controlling immigration is not often made in the left press, but that is not because of some conspiracy to suppress discussion. Rather, it is because the argument for controls on immigration is at best an expression of grudging acceptance of restrictions on freedom of movement, and at worst mere cover for xenophobia and racism. Grudging acceptance usually makes deadly dull copy; xenophobia and racism the left press can quite happily leave to the tabloids.

As for the relationship between sex and politics, well, Everett's argument (which, incidentally, is quite a common one among those who write letters to left-wing periodicals) is most effectively answered by another letter in this week's postbag, from Martin Walker of the Scottish lesbian and gay rights group Outright.

He asks NSS readers to give a helping hand to two lesbians, Maria O'Rourke and Simone Wallace, who are taking their former employers to an industrial tribunal, claiming that they were sacked for being lesbians and that this contravenes the Sex Discrimination Act.

"The couple have won the first round," he writes, "which already creates a British legal precedent for gay rights in the workplace. If they win their case an employee could no longer be dismissed from their job simply because they are a lesbian or gay man."

I'm no fan of the increasingly fashionable use of third person plural pronouns as non-gender-specific third person singular pronouns—"they" is not a synonym for "he or she"—but it is difficult to think of a clearer example of "sex, deviant or otherwise" having everything to do with politics. Until lesbians and gay men cease to be discriminated against because of their sexual preferences, homosexuality cannot be considered simply a private matter.

Cheques should be made payable, incidentally, to "Outright Scotland Employment Equality Appeal" and sent to Outright Scotland, The Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Centre, 58a/60 Broughton Street, Edinburgh EH1 3SA.

Paul Anderson

Saintly hindsight

It is sad to see one of your contributors, Ian Aitken, perpetuating the well-established tradition on the centre-right of inducing veneration for leaders of the left once their period of political effectiveness is over ("The left's betrayal of Michael Foot", 30 July). It happened to Attlee, so often excoriated during his period of achievement because he was the most left-wing of the inner circle of the Labour leadership; and then—justifiably but hypocritically—reassessed as a national monument after his retirement.

More appropriate as a view of Michael Foot than Aitken's simplistic image of a good man finally betrayed is something akin to that demonstrated by Foot himself towards his mentor, Aneurin Bevan, in his biography; full admiration for the struggle for socialism and maintenance of its achievements in the major part of a long political career, but embarrassment at the drastic bad judgments towards its end. In the case of Bevan, as Foot has shown, these comprised an abandonment of unilateralism, hence of any possibility of a socialist foreign policy. Foot's own judgment betrayed him grimly in 1982, when he appeared to be trotting along after Thatcher in the desperate renewal of imperialist sentiment which was the Malvinas/Falklands farrago. In this, as with Bevan in the late 1950s, his adoptive policies brought Labour and working people in Britain neither electoral nor ethical advantage (in strong contrast to the principled stand of Gaitskell and Bevan over Suez, to be fair).

It is unjust to a man who has done so much for socialism in Britain (albeit more suspect in his admiration for Wordsworth than in his love for Milton and Byron!) to be used as a pretext for an attack on another major socialist figure, Tony Benn (whose sanctification will, no doubt, also come in time).

John E Coombes
Colchester
Essex

Jobs without bombs

The defence by Tim Webb of MSF's support for the European Fighter Aircraft project (Letters, 30 July) is almost enough to make one despair. At the first branch meeting I attended of one of MSF's predecessors, in around 1949, I moved a resolution criticising military expenditure. I was, I thought, well prepared to refute all the standard arguments for continuing to squander resources on means of destruction, which are still deployed today. In the event, I was surprised to find that I hardly needed to. If memory serves me correctly, the resolution was carried unanimously.

How times change; 40-odd years on, it seems I would get a very different response. Yet it is a hundred times more important today to achieve a peace dividend than in 1949. The frightening increase in the power of hi-tech weaponry, "conventional" as well as nuclear, must surely make every thinking person shudder. Have we learnt nothing from the millions of dead in countless wars since 1945?

It is often said that weapons do not make wars, men do. Perfectly true, but weapons make war possible, and modern weapons make war more deadly and more destructive. Weapons are not made to keep engineers in jobs; they are made to be used, and they *are* used, as we see in all too horrifying reality throughout the world. To argue that we should go on producing them because they provide jobs, without regard for their purpose, is little short of obscene. And how many times does it have to be pointed out before it sinks in that investment in peaceful projects produces more jobs than the same amount in military industry?

As for the "potential spin-off technology", this is akin to Thatcherite "trickle-down" economics—to help the poor make the rich richer. The 15,000 workers on the EFA project, and the rest of the scientists, engineers and other technologists in the arms industry, should be *demanding* the right to use their skills for useful, constructive purposes instead of redeveloping yet more devastating weapons. While recognising all the difficulties, and accepting that we all ultimately share the responsibility, those who create the weapons of mass destruction must surely accept that they have a special duty to consider the results of their endeavours. Lip-service to diversification is

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not enough. MSF and its members in the arms industry should be in the forefront of the campaigns to change to socially useful production.

Frank Jackson
Vice-chair
World Disarmament Campaign
London E2

Power union

Of course Tim Webb (Letters, 30 July) must argue for maintenance of his members' jobs. If he didn't, I would cease to be a member of MSF.

The problem only arises because MSF, and others, have a power of veto rather than persuasion over the policy of the Labour Party.

Richard Hall
Reading
Berkshire

Absent from the debate

The editor of *Searchlight*, Gerry Gable (Letters, 30 July), must live in cloud cuckoo land if he believes that the current NUJ policy is "No platform for fascists". If "no platform" were the case, a large section of the union's members in broadcasting and elsewhere would be facing expulsion from it. Furthermore, if Gable was so concerned about this issue he would have noticed that, year after year, black members of the NUJ have been moving resolutions at the annual conference to improve race reporting and sharpen journalistic exposure of fascist organisations and individuals. Or maybe he could have turned up to a meeting and told the NUJ how to do the job better. The sad reality is that he has been completely absent from that debate.

The NUJ guidelines on race reporting advise members: "When interviewing representatives of racist organisations or reporting meetings or statements or claims, journalists should carefully check all reports for accuracy and seek rebutting or opposing comments", and that, "the anti-social nature of such views should be exposed". For the record, this is exactly what Marc Wadsworth, chair of the Black Members' Council, did during a celebrated piece of ITV interviewing some years ago on *Thames News*, when the then leading member of the National Front Patrick Harrington, was masquerading as an innocent student at a north London polytechnic. His brave report delivered the most telling blow in the fight to have the fascist removed from the college. I have every reason to be confident that Wadsworth has continued to expose and oppose racist and fascist views at every opportunity.

Jim Boumelha
Former NUJ President
Oxford

THIS ENGLAND

$5 for all entries printed below. Entries on a POSTCARD please

•A farm worker deliberately provoked an armed siege because he wanted to be shot dead by trained police marksmen, Hove Crown Court was told yesterday.

But the man, 41, who took his jacket off to make himself an easier target, failed in his suicide bid when four out of the five police shots missed him.—*Independent* (Derek Morgan)

• It seems to me that the best way to guarantee getting one's picture in the *Morning Star* is to join the Tory cabinet.

I happen to believe that the desire to see photographs of members of the Conservative cabinet is a serious perversion.

It is not the job of our paper to cater to the tastes of perverts.

I beg you to think of your loyal readers.—Letter in the *Morning Star* (Mat Coward)

Charting society

At last, we know our place in society—well, we think we do. After ten minutes' effort, and borrowing a calculator, we've come out below the national average household income on the IPPR Income Distribution Chart ("Knowing your place in society", 30 July). But if Steven Webb and Richard Thomas think it shows "clearly the shape and structure of income distribution", we doubt it. We also wonder how many people on low incomes it will enable to "locate themselves in relation to the population".

In our opinion, the chart is dense, off-putting and inaccessible. Max Beerbohm once drew a cartoon of the Webbs rearranging toy soldiers as they wanted to rearrange society. This chart sadly has some of the same feel to it. But then people at the lowest end of the UK income distribution scale are unlikely to need a chart to remind them.

Suzy Croft and Peter Beresford
Lewis Cohen Urban Studies Centre
London SW11

Protection for all

Aiden Foster-Carter (Letters, 30 July) criticises our case for the new protectionism. He makes three major points. First, he says protectionism has been tried and found wanting before. The new protectionism emphasises local control plus competition to ensure the build-up of maximum diversity in a local economy. This would ensure that goods and services can be bought primarily locally, then nationally, then regionally, and only as a last resort should long-distance trade be considered.

Our book, *The New Protectionism*, explicitly rejects both the old protectionism and the free-trade package as unable to foster and protect the three Es: equity, environment, and equality. The argument between free trade and (old) protectionism is sterile. Both ideologies have been used mercilessly to suit the pockets and interests of the powerful. So-called world trade is, in fact, dominated by 500 transnational corporations. To rely on carting more goods and services around the world as the answer to the world's present and coming crises denies the evidence of damage to the environment, quality of life and justice, when worker is set against worker around the world, or when forests are chopped down to pay for debt, or when resources are squandered to fund short-term industrial advantage.

Dr Foster-Carter's second point, that prioritising the local cannot avoid embracing nationalism, is true to the extent that the nation-state and groups of states can protect the interest of their inhabitants. This is the only way to counter the devastation wrought on communities and countries by footloose companies and capital, so encouraged by Gatt and the rest of the free-trade system. The transference of power to the "market", as recent events from Timex, Hoover and the ERM all evidence, means that politicians' capacity to help mould events is being eroded. Everything the centre-left stands for—more democracy, visible controls, accountability, meeting the needs of all, and so on—is undermined.

By not entering this political debate, the centre-left colludes in its long-term downfall. What good is it to argue for a bill of rights if the dominant right is for capital to circle the globe looking for the most favourable terms and conditions? Is the only future one where people in both north and south out-grovel each other in offering lax standards for health and safety, ceilings on environmental protection, and cuts in welfare benefits and the social wage?

Finally, Dr Foster-Carter calls for intervention and regulation that goes with the grain of "irreversible global character of modernity". The issue is what to do both locally and globally. The

Min Cooper

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free-trade package wipes out the local in favour of the global.

To call free-trade—a misnomer for deregulated commerce—"the least worst system ever devised" is an insult to the majority of those in the south, suffering under structural adjustment programmes, and the insecure majority in the east forced to swap jobs and cheap housing for a consumer dream mostly only enjoyed by the new mafia and the tens of millions in the OECD countries—for whom the yolk of international competitiveness is already resulting in more job losses, and wage and social cuts.

World trade should be the source of last resort. Gatt aims to make it a first resort. A new protectionism, of the kind detailed in our book, has to be debated if the world is to protect the future. The alternative is to allow the conditions to develop which, we fear, will make the growth of "free-market fascism" inevitable.

Tim Lang and Colin Hines
London

City structures

Bob Colenutt and Geraint Ellis ("Boosting the Tories", 30 July) argue that Labour councillors should avoid involvement with joint local authority/commercial sector city marketing committees, since these are inevitably anti-democratic covers for promoting Conservative ideology. Colenutt and Ellis avoid the real and difficult issue of how British cities can build the structures that will enable them to maintain and develop their economies in the context of the single European market.

Councils that accept a responsibility for the economic future of their city face the reality that almost any company considering investment now knows that it has the choice of any location in the European Community. The result is the emergence across Europe of the "entrepreneurial city", organised to provide a combination of public infrastructure and commercial strengths, and with the ability to market itself to sources of public and private investment. British cities, suffering the handicaps of minimal legal powers, tight government controls of their spending, and without the support of regional authorities, are desperately ill-equipped to compete on this European stage.

Our experience in Southampton has been that local commerce is keenly aware of the threat of civic-led competition from the rest of Europe. They expect the city council to adopt the role of a European city, and to take the lead in planning and marketing the local economy. City marketing enables Labour to set the political agenda, and it effectively makes Labour's case that planning and public investment are essential for a successful economy.

Labour councils can use the European dimension to demonstrate that commercial success depends on successful cities. Cities that are attractive places for people to live and work in require not only good services, but social justice too. These objectives can only be provided by collective efforts through high-quality, well-funded civic government. Learning from the European civic experience destroys the new right fallacy that public expenditure prevents private investment. Colenutt and Ellis suggest that Labour councils should establish anti-poverty coalitions instead of city marketing. Why should these be alternatives? In Southampton, we are doing both.

Councillor John Arnold
Chair, Strategy and Development Committee
Southampton City Council

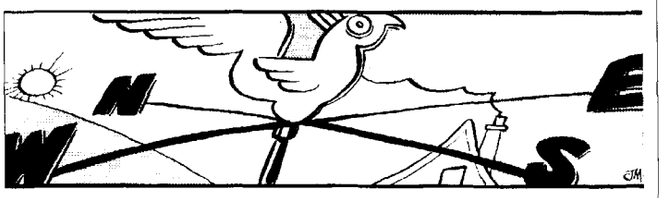
Party pooper

Your diary item on the Mark Thatcher *Spitting Image* puppet (Shoreditch, 6 August) had Eddie Seymour, secretary of the St Ives CLP, opining that I am "a mite undisciplined to be in a political party".

For over 20 years I was a member of the Labour Party, then I made the mistake of joining the St Ives party—in my opinion, probably the barmiest in the country—which likes to hand out "discipline" more than it values members. That's why there are more ex-members of the party around here than there are seagulls. That's why it is little more than a party of puppets—now minus one.

Roy Bland
St Ives
Cornwall

FRINGE BENEFITS



Colin Ward looks in on the academic publishing mafia

We self-employed authors are notoriously jealous of academic colleagues. How we envy the fact that the department meets the cost of their stationery, postage, computing, photocopying and secretarial help and that the library on the doorstep will instantly procure the most recondite material from anywhere in the world. And we add the usual clichés about ivory towers.

The reality is different. Partly because the policy of increasing student numbers while reducing lecturer numbers, means that time available for research is whittled away. The students are sold short and so are their teachers. Partly because non-teaching time is eroded by endless meetings where different faculties are pitted against each other, and everyone is expected to dream up jejune money-making ploys. But partly too, because academic publishing has been turned into a racket by outsiders.

There was once a time when the journals of learned societies were published at or below cost for sheer love of the subject. Even outsiders like me could afford to buy them. I have even contributed to them, but stopped, not because of being unpaid, but because of the insult of having my thoughts marked like a student essay by a bunch of "referees", all of whom had to demonstrate that they were smarter than the writer.

An article in the July issue of *ALCS News* from the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society lifts the lid off academic publishing. Journal prices rose by 114 per cent in the 1980s (while the retail price index went up by 41.1 per cent). The number of titles bred like rabbits "and the chief rabbit was Robert Maxwell of Pergamon who became notorious among librarians for multiplying his titles".

There are huge profits in journal publishing. Not surprising, since the editing is done for free. But so is the writing, and publishers "have increasingly insisted that all writers provide written assignments of copyright".

The anonymous author then has a delicious paragraph about the feudal system into which scholars have imperceptibly fallen: "Academics publish because it's part of the job. Under increasing pressure to prove themselves, all university teachers and members of research establishments are being forced into the non-stop production of articles. This is part of a larger game, of course, in which universities are encouraged to compete against each other for research funds from a central pool. But because it's part of the job—to gain promotion, to prove the value of departments, to win better funds for research within the university—most academics have traditionally not expected to be paid. Writing articles, indeed, is considered a sort of intellectual tithe, given up to preserve a place in the feudal world that is academia."

I resolved to try this idea out when I next met a scholar from inside the system. The first chanced to be the amiable philosopher Ray Monk, biographer of Wittgenstein. "Oh, it's worse than that," he said. "There is far greater pressure to publish than to *read* the stuff." But my problem is that in the various fields that interest me, I *do* want to know what current research is yielding.

So whenever I'm in a university town I barge into the library (I've never been denied access) and do a quick trawl through the ones that might have a nugget of pure gold for me. The trouble is that, notwithstanding the compulsory abstracts at the beginning and all that refereeing, there is no way of knowing where it will turn up. So I spend extravagantly on photocopying. Now fees are collected by the Copyright Licensing Agency from the university or college on photocopying from journals. That fixes what I have to pay for copying.

But who gets this fee? Not the author of all that gold or dross, but the publishers of the journal.

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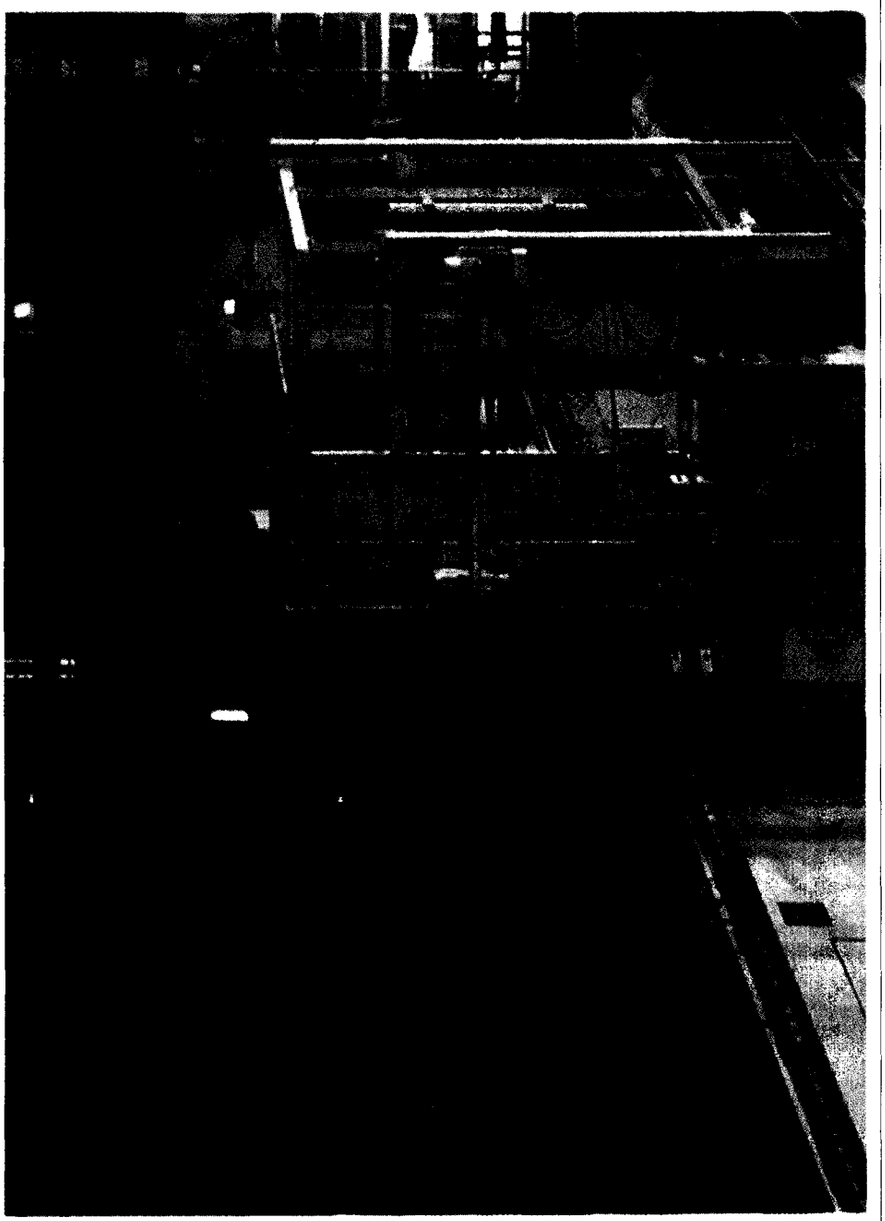
As the latest consultation on BNFL's new reprocessing plant in Cumbria gets under way, **Vicky Hutchings** went to meet the people who live and work there

Between a rock and a hard place



Above: the cooling pond at Thorp, where spent fuel waits to be reprocessed into reusable uranium and plutonium, plus highly radioactive fission products, before the lot is returned to its country of origin. But as the furore over Thorp grows, will it all have to be sent home again as it is? As for Thorp's really long-term future, while world uranium prices remain low ($20 a kilogram), why should anyone, except those already locked into deals made decades ago, as at BNFL, pay the high reprocessing costs ($1,000 a kilogram) unless they want the plutonium? Existing Magnox spent fuel had to be reprocessed. These days, spent fuel does not. So why not buy the lot?

"My dad told me," says John Kane, over pints of Scotch bitter in the Waverley Hotel in Whitehaven. "He told me: 'You'll have a job *for life*.'" Not a thought that induces much enthusiasm in a journalist, where staying in a job even for five years is viewed as a sign of failure. In truth, a thought that means less and less these days, sounding increasingly like a quaint leftover from a bygone age. But his dad has been right. So far.

For 18 years, John Kane was a process worker at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd at Sellafield in Cumbria. For the past two years, he has been the GMB convenor there. Kane, a stocky, muscular Celt, exudes the sort of guarded strength you imagine might be unleashed at any moment in defence of his men. And it is: "We need the jobs. Who am I to deny them that? There's 12 per cent unemployment here now. If Thorp doesn't go ahead, it could be 20 per cent by Christmas." There are suggestions from BNFL that it could go as high as 25 per cent.

Thorp is BNFL's thermal oxide reprocessing plant, waiting since January, when the first consultation into Thorp ended with approval being given, for the government go-ahead to reprocess spent nuclear fuel from around the world. This will mean that BNFL racks up some £500 million in profits over the next ten years, supporting 1,700 local full-time jobs directly, not counting all the indirect and induced employment that would result. BNFL already reprocesses the spent fuel from Britain's ageing Magnox reactors, but these won't last much beyond this century: "Thorp will take over as Magnox winds down," says Kane with satisfaction, a dreamy look in his eye. This, you sense, is how he thinks it ought to be: that one day he will tell his sons that they, too, can have a job for life.

After all, BNFL is almost all there is: "Sixty-six per cent of the families living in the borough [Copeland] have at least one member employed by BNFL." The result? "Those against Thorp, they don't come here. They go outside the area and stir up people's fears. Outside the area, they don't seem to see just how we're suffering." In fact, he claims, it is outsiders who are responsible for the cluster of childhood leukaemias at Seascale: "It's the influx of newcomers to the area who have brought the disease in with them."

There are six industrial and three service unions on the site. "We've written to John Gummer, David Hunt, Gillian Shephard and John Major," says Kane. "We want them to meet a delegation from Copeland, not just the workforce, but also the council, the churches, the local Chamber of Commerce. We've had no response from John Major, except an acknowledgment. We've had no response at all from Gummer, Gillian Shephard or Hunt." A population at bay, scatter-gunning SOS signals into the postal system, hoping someone out there is paying attention: "We're still waiting."

An air of waiting certainly hangs over the Thorp building itself. Aside from the occasional guard ("Has that woman got permission to carry a camera?"), the place feels

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devoid of life, except for the continuous and mournful sound of the radiation alarm system. Occasionally one meets another human being in the endless warren of corridors and steel, festooned with posters exhorting you not to smoke and to keep Thorp tidy. Then there is the giant pool, spent fuel rods languishing on the bottom, as blue and as deep and as warm as you could wish for. Just bring me a sangría. Oh, and a Geiger counter.

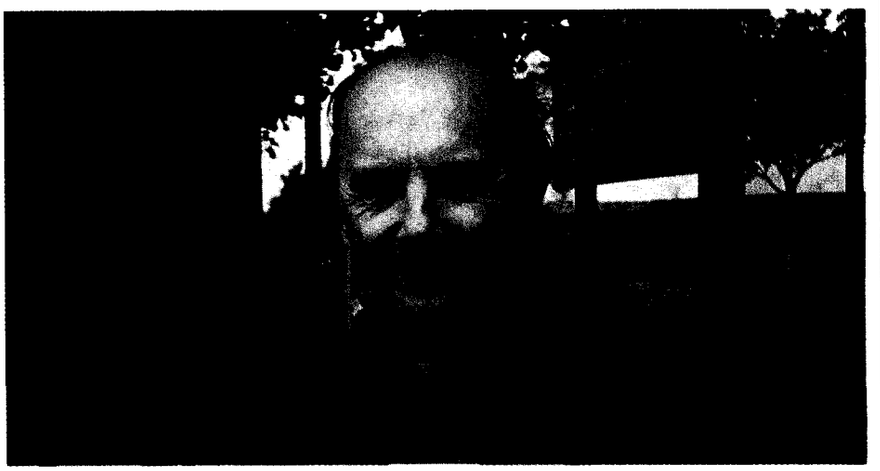
Peter Johnstone, who runs The Compleat Angler with his wife Christine (fishing tackle, tobacconist and confectioner) in Whitehaven's King Street, is chair both of the local Chamber of Commerce and of the Federation of Small Businesses, of which his wife is secretary. This year has been a particularly bad time for business in general. Usually, during the summer, trade remains fairly stable because, while the locals go away on holiday, they are replaced by the more rugged sort of tourist. "There's a saying around here," says Peter: "If you can see the Isle of Man, it's going to rain; if you can't, it's raining."

But, in addition to the weather, they're now having to cope not only with the recession, but the continuing bad publicity surrounding Thorp; and the tourists haven't come in the same numbers. Worse, the locals aren't spending either. Peter says he knows people who have been refused loans from their banks or building societies while the present uncertainty lasts. Asked how they feel about nuclear power in general, both look slightly nonplussed. Christine speaks of the trains carrying nuclear flasks that rumble by their house, almost with affection: "It's never bothered us." After all, they've lived with it for most of their lives. What does bother them is the media: "Television? It's all got out of hand," says Peter. "They make the news. They don't wait until something's happened."

Ann Bennett, Labour leader of Copeland council is cock-a-hoop over what she considers Greenpeace's latest *faux pas*: "They jumped the gun, rushing to court to stop the testing, when no decision to test had even been made." The story is as follows: on 22 July, HM Inspectorate of Pollution and the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, jointly issued a statement saying they were "minded" to allow BNFL to test Thorp by putting natural and depleted uranium through the system, on or after 12 August. Greenpeace went to court asking for a judicial review of this decision, claiming it was a way of getting

Left, one of the many posters at Thorp: at least it's clean

Leonora Casement



The Reverend Jim Baker, who wonders whether nuclear's not better than nothing

the go-ahead for Thorp through "the back door". Maff and HMIP told the court that there had been no decision, as yet, to test Thorp, and Greenpeace's demand for a review was dismissed. But Greenpeace did win a concession that no steps would be taken to test the plant without giving the organisation seven days notice to mount a legal challenge. Both sides are claiming victory. In the meantime, Bennett wonders where Greenpeace gets its money from: "Who's giving them all this money to be able to keep rushing to court? There's something odd going on there." The spectacle of tiny BNFL confronted by the giant multinational, Greenpeace Plc, is the way it's seen in Copeland.

Like John Kane, Ann Bennett has also tried to get outsiders interested in Copeland's unemployment and circumstances. She has a list of all those who promised to come and their excuses: 2 October 1992, Michael Heseltine (another meeting); 14 October, Robin Squire (helicopter developed a fault); 9 March, Michael Howard (cabinet meeting); 24 May, Sir George Younger (no reason given); 5 July, Roger Freeman (also no reason).

BNFL has pumped a lot of money into the area, and its annual spending amounts to some £60 million in Cumbria. It put £4 million into Whitehaven's town centre, and is investing more than £10 million in the economic development of west Cumbria through projects like the Westlakes Science and Technology Park. The council has been attempting to find other sources of income, and besides getting some European money over the past three years, Whitehaven now has Assisted Area Status. One of the plans Bennett hopes will get under way is the renovation of the harbour, once one of the busiest on the west coast of Britain, but now a sad overgrown sight with a few cranes. This will, she hopes, be turned into a marina, where water-skiers, lately banned from Lake Windermere, will come to play.

Jim Baker, the rector of Whitehaven, is undoubtedly a very nice man: kind and thoughtful. Yet he, too, supports the new Thorp reprocessing plant at Sellafield: "My argument with Greenpeace has always been that people are part of the environment. I worked for many years in Sheffield and parts of Fife, and I've seen the effects of high unemployment. The sadness I've experienced as a clergyman is where there's been the highest unemployment. That is immediate: high alcohol, anti-social behaviour, break-ups. At the moment, compared with some places, it's all right. Here, we're trying to create something, and it's starting to come up. They're starting to get some self-esteem. Gradually, the scars of the past are starting to disappear. My sense is that in this community, work is what matters. Don't forget they've lived with nuclear for decades now. And don't forget they've lived with coal. We've had some of the worst mine disasters in British history."

In October, a Granada film, *Justice for Gemma*, will be broadcast. This is about a leukaemia victim from Cleator Moor, some eight miles from Whitehaven. Feelings are running high about the programme, and I've been told that the tourist industry is "up in arms" about it. What reactions has Baker found in his parishioners? "Generally, there's no powerful emotion that comes at you. There's not a lot of discussion. Perhaps, because jobs seem to be so important, you suppress your fears. But my impression is that we've never had *any* discussion about it. Of course, Cleator Moor's not this community.

"When children get cancers, it's a terrible thing. You look for something to blame—and rightly so. But the evidence is all so unclear. If the evidence was clear that this community was being badly effected by nuclear energy [pause] . . . But I get no sense that it is: the numbers are so minute."

Baker spells out the problem as he see it: "In a way, what I'm saying is that the problem isn't nuclear, it's human beings and whether we're up to handling an issue that is so profound. Surely we are capable of living up to the challenge?" He shakes himself: "But, in a way, all this is a bit cerebral, the idea of nuclear energy, when you haven't got a job."

Back in London, I tell a friend where I've been. "Oh, yes," he says, casually. "My partner's sister-in-law was killed by BNFL. She died of cancer at the age of 22." I think they're going to have a hard job attracting the water-skiers and the sailing fraternity. I suspect BNFL will remain almost all there is.

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British Gas

To construct a sensible energy policy, argues **Patricia O'Donnell**, the government should switch its emphasis from supply to demand

VAT price energy?

So VAT on domestic fuels lost the Tories the Christchurch by-election. How sad. As Antoine Boulay de la Meurthe said, on hearing of the execution of the Duke of Enghien—"It is worse than a crime, it is a blunder." Already backbench Tories, and not just the usual malcontents, are growling rebellion, and the measure may have a tough time in parliament. Familiar signs of governmental funk are now detectable. Perhaps, it is being hinted, only the first stage, an 8 per cent levy, may be imposed. Yet, ironically, this was one of the few taxation measures of recent years which, properly implemented, would have been entirely justified.

The problem is the scrambling, for-God's-sake-Norman-pull-a-Rabbit-out-of-the-hat way in which the whole idea was launched. It was a desperate wheeze to plug the black hole that is the PSBR, rather than part of a strategy to introduce a progressive, environmentally based tax. And therein lies the rub. To do the job properly would require a whole raft of other measures, all designed to improve the efficiency with which the fuel was used and so keep any cost rises to a minimum. But that would require something that has been anathema these past 14 years—energy and environment policies. Instead, the government proposes to subsidise a few of the worst affected and let the rest go hang.

Not that a Tory would apologise for the lack of an energy policy—"Our policy is the market. If it doesn't pay, don't do it." Any attempt to break the economy down into separate, autonomous segments, with differing economic policies for each, was doomed and self-defeating. The role of government should be limited to privatising producers and ensuring effective competition, so that markets work efficiently. The hidden hand would then ensure the greatest good of the greatest number.

And who can deny the effects of that policy over the past 14 years? The landscape is littered with the mausoleums of defunct energy corporations—the CEGB, the Electricity Council, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; their workers mainly redundant, their bosses now chairmen of privatised utilities on five times their old salaries. Even the Department of Energy is no longer with us; it now occupies a couple of desks, deep in the bowels of the Department of the Environment, while its ministerial alumni are scattered throughout Whitehall and beyond. And what a crew they were—Lawson, Parkinson, Mellor, Lamont, Hunt, and a dozen other lesser lights did time in its rather seedy offices by the Thames. Energy was to government what Borstal was to delinquents, a breeding ground for all sorts of nefarious activities. Here, the plans were laid and techniques honed for breaking up viable corporations, eliminating R&D expenditure, ripping off consumers, dispossessing employees, selling off taxpayers' assets at fire sale prices, and stuffing untold millions into the mouths of merchant bankers and a myriad other "advisors". It was piracy on a scale unmatched in modern British history.

So why spoil a good thing? First, because the golden goose is well and truly laid out. There are no energy corporations left to privatise, unless you count the half dozen or so holes in the ground likely to comprise the British coal industry in a year or two. And from those eggs have hatched monsters. In electricity, expensive nuclear and gas-fired electricity is ousting cheaper UK coal-based power (and even cheaper imported coal) forcing the still nationalised, and rapidly shrinking, British Coal into a £588 million loss this year, while the privatised electricity generators, especially the regional companies, are positively embarrassed by their profits, estimated to grow by at least 15 per cent compound for the next few years.

Second, because the unwillingness of the well off to contemplate direct tax rises—what Galbraith called the culture of contentment—has all but eliminated income tax as a way of raising big sums of new money. Big sums are certainly needed, and not just in Britain. With the recession biting and unemployment rising, budget deficits are ballooning throughout Europe. Energy and pollution taxes represent the biggest—and probably the last—major source of revenue still left for governments.

Not that energy is untaxed now. There are large imposts on most oil products and VAT on domestic fuels is almost universal throughout continental Europe. But these are mainly *ad valorem* taxes, unrelated to carbon content or pollution effects. The new, European, thinking, is that energy taxes can both produce revenue and encourage desirable patterns of behaviour and consumption.

But that needs policies which regulate the market, to send the right signals to producer and consumer alike. In short, it will first be necessary to tackle the single biggest problem with the notion of an energy "market"—the imbalance on almost every level between supply and demand.

For markets to work reasonably there must be a rough equality between supply and demand. In energy, that is simply not the case. There is a huge imbalance in economic, political and institutional power between the relatively few, massive corporate suppliers and the millions of individual consumers. The result is a grotesque distortion of the "market". Billions are spent on, for example, gas-fired power stations, which on any objective assessment of generating requirements are unnecessary, and further huge sums are spent on redundancy payments for miners made unemployed as a consequence. Meanwhile, billions more are wasted every year because cheap and simple improvements in our energy usage go unmade.

With virtually no nationalised supply corporations to worry about, government could now turn its attention to those demand-side

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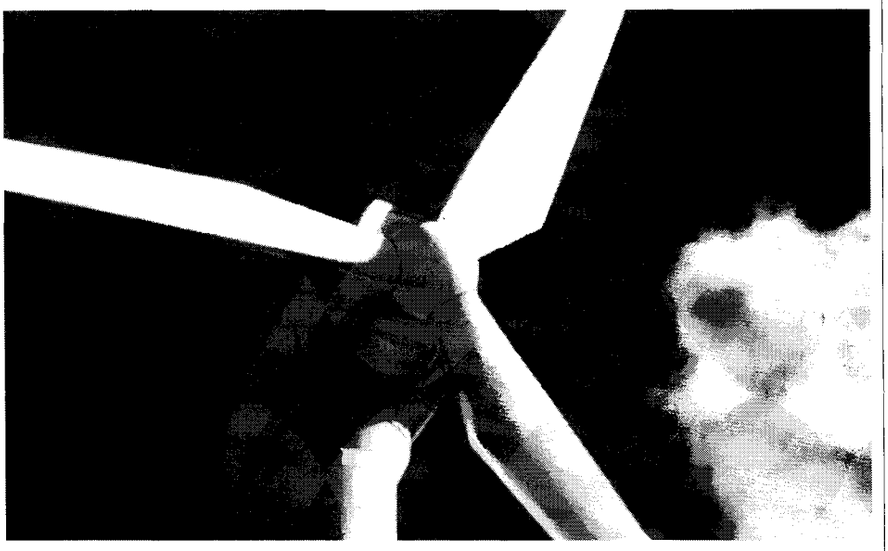
policies it has too long neglected. That means new institutions—to encourage new investment—access to capital on the same terms enjoyed by the supply utilities and a willingness on the part of the utilities to change from a blinkered concentration on investment in supply. It also implies a much greater emphasis on conservation and the use of new, more efficient and environmentally benign energy-using technologies.

The advantages of shifting the emphasis of policy from supply to demand are many. The most important are:

- Cost. Most conservation techniques save money in the long, and often very short, term;
- Pollution and emission control. Reduction in consumption, improved control over use and the use of renewable resources can cut emission of carbon dioxide and pollutants such as nitrogen and sulphur oxides;
- Social equity. Fuel poverty is a real problem in Britain; more people in the UK die of hypothermia than in any comparable European country. The poor spend nearly 10 per cent of disposable income on heating, twice the proportion of better-off households. Bringing poor houses up to modern energy standards would improve health and cut spending on fuel, much of which is provided by state benefits;
- Employment. Conservation and new use technologies would generate jobs relatively cheaply, and most of them would be for semi-skilled and unskilled workers in urban areas, matching the pattern of unemployment;
- Economic competitiveness. Improving energy efficiency would cut manufacturing costs, while at the same time stretching out the lifetime of indigenous energy supplies.

Above all, it is the link with improving environmental and living standards that should be at the cutting edge of energy policy. Energy, after all, is not an end in itself, merely a means to an end. If that end can be achieved more safely, cleanly and cheaply, then so much the better.

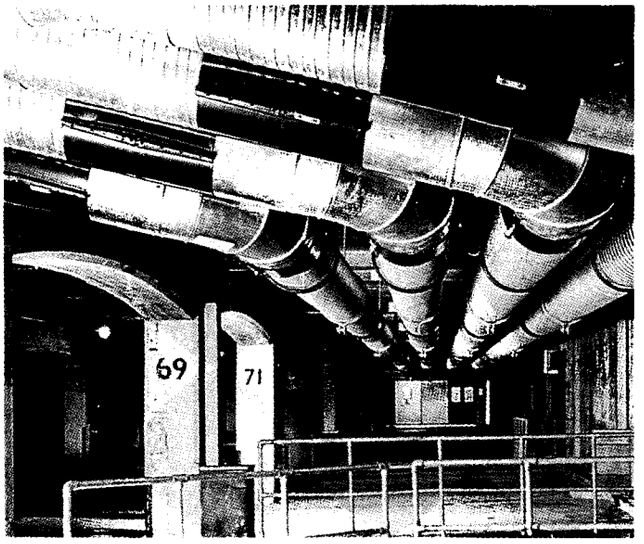


The UK government said at the end of March this year in its white paper on the future of coal that it: "intends to work towards a figure of 1,500 MW of new electricity generating capacity [2 per cent to make a total of 4 per cent] from renewable sources for the UK by the year 2000". Yet this target hasn't changed since extra funding for renewables began after the privatisation of the electricity industry—and despite the fact that, around the same time, the Department of Energy went on record as saying that, in principle, half Britain's electricity demand could be met from renewables. Last December, the Renewable Energy Advisory Group concluded that renewables could contribute "between about 5 per cent and 45 per cent of 1991 electricity supply by around the year 2025". The result could well be the lower figure

Despite the attractions, the UK's record on demand-side management could be described, at best, as patchy. We have probably the worst insulated housing stock in northern Europe, in part a reflection of the high average age of our buildings, but even the performance of our modern building lags well behind that of those on most of the Continent. UK building regulations were tightened in 1990, but only to the standard set in Sweden in 1930. Amazingly, in 1989, the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency Office, which guided the UK's conservation programme, cut by half the grant for loft insulation.

There have been some efforts to encourage improvement. The newly established pressure group, the National Energy Foundation, is pioneering the energy labelling of houses, on a scale of 1-10, so that prospective buyers can get an idea of running costs before they spend their money. The improved performance need not cost much, especially if it is built in from the start. Houses in the Milton Keynes "Energy Park", in which a number of designs have been tested, have shown it is possible to beat the existing building regulations by at least 30 per cent, with increases in construction costs of only 1-2 per cent.

The story is much the same for domestic appliances. The best, condensing, boilers have efficiencies in the range 85- 90 per cent, compared with 65-70 per cent—and often much less, given the general standard of maintenance—of the conventional boiler. The best cookers, fridges, freezers and washing machines on the market typically have half the energy costs of the worst. Mini fluorescent lights, which fit the standard socket, are five times as efficient and last at least five times as long as the familiar tungsten filament bulb. The House of Commons Select Committee on Energy estimated that proven measures, economic at the current cost of fuels, could cut the UK energy bill by at least



Combined heat and power schemes, like that above, being built in the City of London, produce both electricity and hot water for heating. They can use up to 80 per cent of the energy in the fuel, compared to the 35 per cent of a typical, electricity-only power station. The UK lags well behind continental Europe in its use of CHP. Over 30 per cent of Dutch and Danish electricity is produced in such schemes, compared to about 4 per cent in Britain. Each thousand megawatts of CHP installed saves about 1.25 million tonnes of carbon, an eighth of the UK's target reduction for the year 2000. The government has recently raised its target for the amount of CHP installed by the end of the decade to 5,000 MW, but will almost certainly have to ease present restrictions, such as DoE leasing guidelines, if the target is to be achieved

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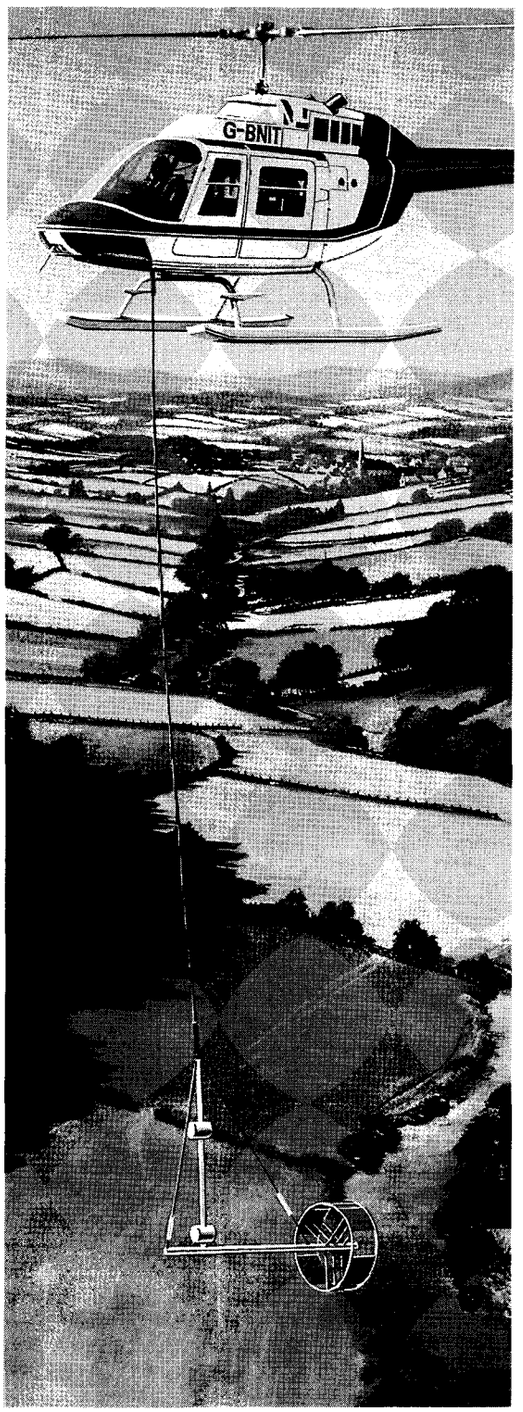
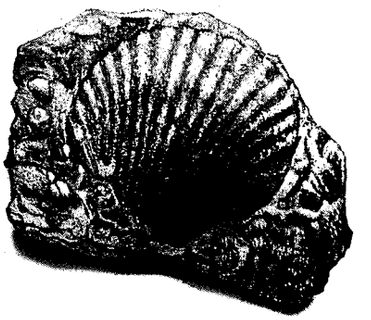
The Sellafield Repository.

Let's go into it together.



Measuring changes in the Earth's magnetic field shows the structure of underground rock formations.

You may have read and heard about the Sellafield Repository Project from different people in the press, on television, at meetings and on the radio. We felt you would like to know more about the thinking behind it; the short and long-term environmental implications and, the whole issue of safe disposal and storage of radioactive waste.



A fossil from 1500 feet which has lain undisturbed for millions of years.

At Sellafield our objective is straightforward. To see if the site is suitable for the safe disposal of intermediate and some low-level radioactive waste. In order to give you the facts, much of what we'll be saying is in answer to questions we've been asked.

WHY BURY THE WASTE?

The alternative to burying radioactive waste is to store it above ground. This means leaving the stores for our great grandchildren and their great grandchildren to maintain. It also leaves them to dispose of the waste properly later on.

Not the sort of task we have the right to leave to anyone else.

If the conditions prove to be right, deep underground disposal equals safety in depth. There, concerns about refurbishing stores and repackaging waste do not exist, ice ages can come and go with little effect.

Over the long term radioactive waste must be even safer half a mile below ground, surrounded by solid rock, than stored on the surface. The radiation dose to work people can be minimised. And time is on our side as all radioactivity fades eventually.

WHY HERE?

The search for a potentially suitable site has been under way for 5 years. We began by asking the experts at the British Geological Survey where to find rock offering the right conditions for burying

Concrete excavated from the foundatio of Hadrian's Wall shows how well simil materials can withstand the centuries.

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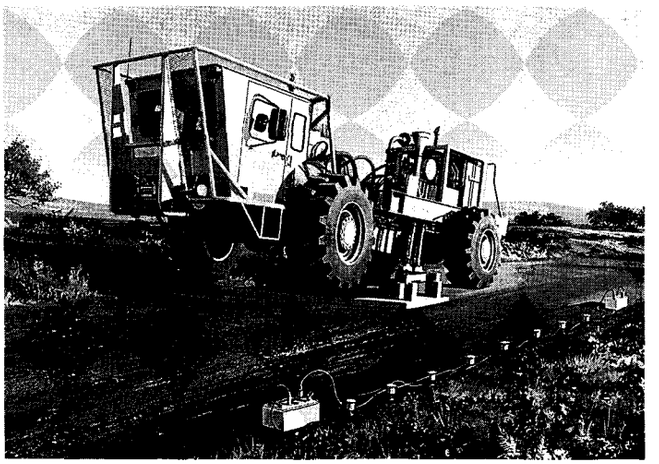
radioactive waste. They pointed to about a third of the UK. Closer investigation followed, taking account of land availability, transport infrastructure, geology and town and country planning considerations.

A CHOICE OF TWO.

Detailed study produced a short-list of potentially suitable sites, of which two were already nuclear sites where local communities have knowledge and understanding of the industry: Dounreay and Sellafield. We decided to drill and evaluate the rock formations, and look more closely at the other factors, at these two sites first. The information we gathered left little to choose between them.

However, one major difference remained. More than half of the intermediate-level radioactive waste is produced at Sellafield so to bury it there would avoid having to transport it through Cumbria to another part of the country.

Safety below ground means safety above ground.



By mechanically thumping the earth and listening to the echoes we can see where the different rock strata lie.

WHY HALF A MILE BELOW GROUND?

One of the most thorough geological surveys ever carried out is under way in the Sellafield area. Initiated by UK Nirex Ltd, the investigations involve dozens of research organisations, including many universities and several overseas specialists.

The subject of much of this work is ground water flow. Initial signs are that in the basement rock beneath the Sellafield area groundwater movement is very slow. We are doing a lot more work to be confident that wastes will stay safely in place even through the next Ice Age, 10,000 years from now.

Over the years ahead, and before we are authorised to dispose of any waste, we will build a detailed understanding of the geological environment in the Sellafield area. In building the repository, we will have to convince the independent watch-dogs every step of the way.

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If you have a specific question right now, do either call in, ring us or write it down in the space provided in the coupon.

Sellafield Repository Project Information Unit is jointly staffed by United Kingdom Nirex Limited and British Nuclear Fuels plc

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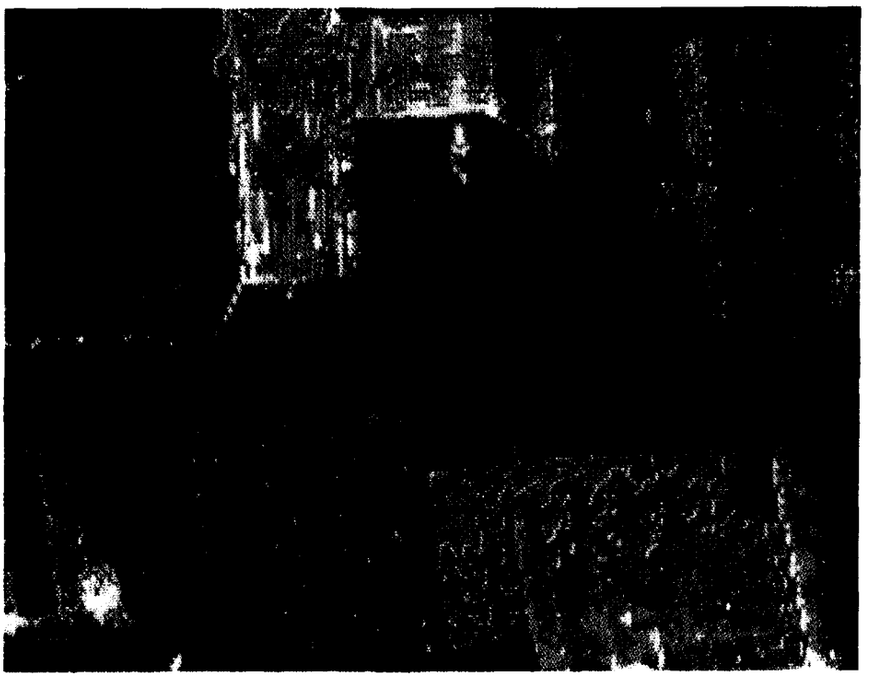

No, not an abstract impressionist painting, but an infra-red survey of west London. Local authorities have used such surveys to pinpoint areas of energy wastage. The plane, equipped with an infra-red imaging video camera, flies over the area in a grid pattern, at a height of about 2,000 feet. The image is converted to false colour and the more energy is being emitted from walls and roofs, the redder the picture. Industrial and commercial firms, as well as the local authorities, can then identify problem sites. Typical cost for a borough is about £15,000, less than 50p per building

20 per cent, while the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change put the figure at 30 per cent.

So if the savings are there, why aren't they being made? Consumer ignorance is one reason. A lot could be done to educate the public, including much greater use of easy to grasp energy labelling schemes so that people can see at a glance what the lifetime costs of a home or an appliance are likely to be. Initial cost, too, is often a major barrier. The cost of a mini fluorescent bulb, for example, is at least £5-£6, while a tungsten filament bulb may be only 40p. Even though the lifetime cost of the fluorescent is much lower, perhaps half, the tungsten will tend to be chosen, especially by the less well off.

The way to solve the problem is to bring in the utilities. "Least cost planning" is the rather arch title by which it is known by the cognoscenti, but, in reality, it is twisting the utilities' arms to act in their own best interest and use their expertise and financial muscle to make the investment. For example, electric companies should fit energy saving devices, like lights, in customers' houses and both sides should share the benefits, some of the savings going to the customer, through lower bills, and some to the utility, through higher prices per unit sold.

Tighter regulations, energy labelling and least cost planning could transform the prospect for conservation and boost employment into the bargain. The benefits of energy pro-

the people behind power

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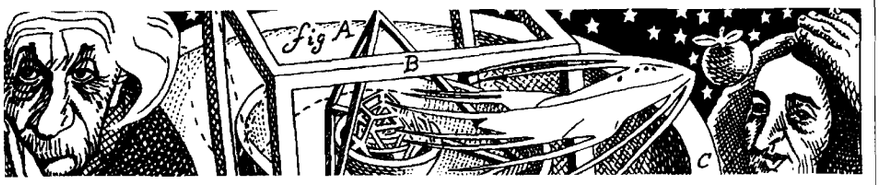
grammes go well beyond the energy saved. Harnessing the ideas and enthusiasm of householders and tenants often results in the accumulated problems of years of neglect being righted. Homes are warmer, free from condensation, damp and mould. The knock-on effects on health can also be significant, especially with children.This seems now to have been recognised legally. Last year, the London Borough of Hackney was prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act over one of its flats, alleged to be a statutory nuisance. The flat had no heating, was damp and had mould growing on the walls. The magistrates found against the council and ordered energy efficiency work to be done on the flat.

Some idea of the effects on employment comes from Linda Taylor of the Association for the Conservation of Energy, who compared a number of studies, in the UK, US and continental Europe. These all envisaged large-scale, long-term programmes, with investment levels of £15 billion-£62 billion over periods ranging from ten to 38 years. The programmes differed somewhat, but most included insulation of residential buildings, district heating, widespread use of heat pumps, domestic solar water heating and biomass plants. Estimates of the number of job-years created ranged from 500,000 to 2,500,000 at a net cost of £9,000-£23,000 per job year. The jobs were well matched to the pattern of unemployment and most of the tasks could be carried out by small teams or firms—an encouragement to the entrepreneurial spirit.

Failure to insist on tight regulations and to invest in energy efficiency and pollution control could lead to actual loss of jobs to industries in countries that take a more progressive view. The OECD estimates that the world market for such equipment is already £140 billion a year and growing at 5.5 per cent annually. The OECD points out: "The largest and technically most advanced environmental markets and industries have developed in those countries with the most comprehensive environmental legislation." German industry, which works under probably the most highly developed energy and environmental regulatory regime in Europe, accounts for 40 per cent of the European market for such equipment and employs 500,000 people

Ultimately, demand-side management, including substantial conservation programmes, is the key to keeping carbon dioxide emissions within bounds and in allowing the rest of the world to begin to catch up with western standards of living. The World Commission on Environment and Development has estimated that world fuel consumption would rise from the equivalent of about 10 billion tonnes of coal annually today to over 55 billion tonnes by 2025 if the rest of the world had the same per capita consumption as the industrialised nations today. The implications for fossil fuel supplies and the global climate are alarming, yet no more so than a world riven by inequities of wealth and tensions over energy supply. We may need to save it, to save ourselves.

DIELECTRICS



Ground control to ET: **Pat Coyne** reflects on earthlings' efforts to contact alien beings

Nasa may have launched its $100 million, all-singing all-dancing SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) project last year (see *NSS* December 1992) but the history of attempts to communicate with extra-terrestrials goes back a surprisingly long way.

I am indebted for this news to Frank Drake*, the doyen of SETI researchers. Drake began his efforts in 1961, but the first serious proposal (if you discount religion, which some people regard as attempts to communicate with sky gods) seems to have been made in 1820 by Karl Friedrich Gauss, perhaps the greatest of 19th-century mathematicians. He wanted to plant an enormous field of wheat in the shape of a right angled triangle. On each side of the triangle would be a square stand of trees, the whole spelling out the theorem of Pythagoras (the square of the hypotenuse, etc). Any alien spying it in its telescopes would, Gauss thought, immediately leap to the conclusion that Earth was populated by intelligent creatures, although the level of intelligence of a race willing to give over a sizeable fraction of its planet to a signal to putative beings is open to question. Gauss' father was a gardener, which may explain something.

The next proposal came in 1840 from Joseph von Littrow, a Viennese astronomer, who suggested digging large trenches in the Sahara, 20 miles across, in the shape of circles, triangles and squares. These would then be filled with kerosene and set alight, creating a signal that could be seen across the Solar System.

By 1869, the proposals were a little more sophisticated. The French physicist Charles Cros suggested that an array of giant mirrors be used to reflect sunlight to Mars. The mirrors would be arranged in a pattern, of the stars in the Great Bear, say. The Martians would recognise this and be drawn ineluctably to the conclusion of the existence of an intelligent, star-gazing, race of earthlings. As with Gauss' and von Littrow's proposals, funds for the project were never forthcoming.

The first person who did manage to build an apparatus for the express purpose of communicating with extra-terrestrials was the electrical pioneer Nikola Tesla. In 1899, the financier J Pierpoint Morgan, obviously jaded with mere earthly fame, gave Tesla the funds to build an enormous radio transmitter in Colorado. It contained a huge coil of wire, 75ft high, and, when it was turned on, people's hair stood on end for miles around. It is not clear what, if anything, it ever transmitted, but it did *receive* strange whistling sounds that Tesla interpreted as coming from alien beings, but which were almost certainly a natural phenomenon called "whistlers". These are low-frequency electromagnetic (radio) waves, caused by lightning flashes that follow the Earth's magnetic field.

The best known of the attempts to communicate is probably the plaque that was attached to Pioneer 10, launched in 1972 and the first human-made object to leave the Solar System. This was designed by Drake and the American astronomer Carl Sagan. Much of it was taken up with diagrammatic attempts to enable any alien who found it to discover where it had come from. A series of lines coming to a point were supposed to represent local pulsars and their relationship in space to our sun. A series of circles of varying sizes represented the solar system, with Pioneer being shown coming from the third planet.

So far so good, but when it came to representing human beings, controversy reigned. The drawing was of a naked man, his hand held up in greeting, while an equally naked woman stood by his side. What any alien finding Pioneer would make of the plaque we shall probably never know, but it was quite clear that a number of earthlings were far from amused. The *Chicago Sun-Times* published the picture with various parts of the couple's anatomy airbrushed out in successive editions. The *Los Angeles Times* denounced Nasa for spreading "smut" through the cosmos, at taxpayer's expense. Feminists complained that the woman was subservient to the man—why weren't they both doing the greeting—while white people complained that the figures looked too black and black people said they looked too white, despite the fact that the artist had attempted to draw them without any obvious racial characteristics. A crisis erupted at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation because human beings had never before been shown naked on Canadian television. By general agreement, the publicity over the plaque put that of the $100 million mission in the shade. As Drake remarked, "it was more of a message *to* Earth rather than *from* Earth." Once bitten, twice shy. For the next Pioneer launch, Nasa rejected a picture of a pregnant woman in favour, initially, of Michelangelo's *David* and then finally they opted for a couple in silhouette form, with a cutaway of a baby inside the mother's body. Over to you, Mr Alien.

**Frank Drake and Dava Sobel, "Is Anyone Out There?" Souvenir Press*

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Romancing the Stone: Sharon in "Sliver"

This summer's magazine and movie obsession with "lesbian chic" reveals a heterosexual culture exhausted by clichés and anxiety, argues **Andrea Stuart**

A touch of taboo

Welcome to the Stone age. In case you have emerged from a coma recently, Sharon Stone's latest film, *Sliver*, will open next month to the kind of hype that would make Spielberg smile. It's the movie that Stone and her studio hope will transform her from the latest Great Blonde Hope into a queen of the box office.

To this end, *Sliver*, an otherwise ho-hum tale of murder and voyeurism in a New York high-rise, features the sort of erotic party pieces that made *Basic Instinct* such a success. These are moments designed to prove that Stone is the actress who will go further than any other has gone before.

This time the forbidden territory is auto-eroticism, which the buttoned-down publisher, Carly, manages to indulge in with both arms firmly gripping the side of her bath (what muscle tone!). As in *Basic Instinct*, panties—or the lack of them—also have their small part to play, when she manages to remove hers and hand them to her lover—in full view of a crowded restaurant.

Despite promising box office takings—$12 million in the first week of opening in the US—*Sliver* is exactly what it sounds like: a disappointing wannabe movie. The film it wants to be is its predecessor, the $385-million grosser that put Stone on the map.

Why Stone, and why now? The answer lies in going back to *Basics*. As the fanny- flashing, bisexual murderess Catherine Trammel, Stone was able to cash in on—and perhaps help create—the "lesbian chic" that everyone was soon talking about. When the film opened, no one was interested in "whodunnit?" (there was never any doubt) but rather in whom Stone was doing it to. "Is she or isn't she?": that was the question. And Stone toyed with this ambiguity at every chance she got.

Stone isn't, of course, the only performer to play gay and come up trumps. Over 60 years ago, Marlene Dietrich's first talkie for an US audience, *Morocco*, clinched her stardom when she played a singer attired in tie and tails who throws a rose to a woman in the audience and then kisses her on the lips. More recently, the singer Marky Mark borrowed his body from a gay-boy pin up as surely as he stole his street style from the 'hood. Yes, a touch of taboo can liven up even the most famous of careers. Look at Madonna, who took a cute matching pair of S&M dykes and spiked up her book's *Sex* appeal.

And this year's favourite taboo seems to be lesbianism. Why else would the media on both sides of the Atlantic get into such a lather over the pictures of country singer kd lang cavorting with super-model Cindy Crawford on the cover of *Vanity Fair*? Or viewers turn on in their droves just to watch Marla the make-over artist kiss Sandra Bernhard on *Roseanne*? With such a spotlight on "lipstick lesbians", no wonder that American *Vogue* asks: "Have we gone gay-girl crazy?"

In the US, at least, this probably does reflect a sea-change in the lesbian community. Clinton has put "one" in his cabinet, while Hollywood buzzes with rumours of the new lesbian power elite, which is rumoured to include any number of "A" list actresses, supermodels and TV personalities.

Off the streets and between the sheets (if Nancy Friday's latest collection of female fantasies is anything to go by) women definitely prefer women—in their heads, at least. If this is true, then men have only themselves to blame. Thanks to the relentless eroticisation of the female body, we are a society of girl-watchers. It's no suprise that women should begin to look as well.

But it is our concern with the "new" lesbianism just a cloak for the old voyeurism? Femme-on-femme images have always been a stock item in our titillation-hungry visual culture. And an icon such as Stone, whatever her personal preferences, has certainly been designed to appeal to men even more than to other women.

On film, Stone is the ultimate boy-toy-blonde. She's a sort of wise-cracking wild thing, so sexually self sufficient (and therefore totally undemanding) that she can do it for herself—or maybe with just a little help from her (girl) friends.

This, I suspect, says a lot more about male angst and wish-fulfilment than it does about female sexuality. It tells us much about the unacknowledged crisis *within* heterosexuality, rather than reflecting a genuine concern with the lesbian community.

The trouble is that sex—heterosexual sex—has become boring. "Do 10 Inch Willies Really Exist?"; "Cosmic Sex"; "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Oral Sex": as headlines like these scream at us from every newspaper, screen and magazine, "sex" is so over-exposed as to be meaningless. It all feels about as subversive as a Bakewell tart. What

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can I say? When *She* and *House and Garden* start crusading for cunnilingus, you know the sin is gone.

It also feels so remarkably passé. Even the sex scenes in *Sliver*—despite Stone's supercharged image and hints of masturbation—still seem kind of tired. Let your eyes wander above eye level in the local newsagent's, or watch a triple XXX video in the privacy of your own raincoat, and things are even worse. Confronted with those women with frosted hair and hyper-glossed lips or those blow-dried, woven-chested studs wearing gold medallions, you can't help but wonder: "Where do these refugees from the 1970s come from?"

These days, even a walk around once-wild Soho prompts not outrage but nostalgia. It looks like some abandoned trading post in an old western, with everyone hanging around in costume, listlessly waiting for someone to break the news that filming is over.

Why is it that we can only depict heterosexuality with any comfort in the past tense? Perhaps it's because those were the halycon days before feminism, before the censorship debates and before Aids. People still claimed that sex was better for you than a three mile jog and that pornography was really a liberating experience, rather than just a business tool for the publisher of the *Daily Sport*.

Then along came the anti-pornography movement and Aids: penetration and its depiction moved from the merely problematic to the potentially lethal. Caught between sexual cliché on one hand and sexual anxiety on the other, these days one can hardly smile and say the word "intercourse" at the same time.

So it's no wonder that a somewhat battered heterosexuality is in the process of reinventing itself, attempting to incorporate the desired elements of wickedness, transgression and fun that have long since gone AWOL from its own image. Hence the lesbian fixation. Unlike gay men, with whom the sex-death equation is too hot to handle, lesbianism is simultaneously safe and pleasurably taboo. And, unlike straight sex, there is still some mystery there.

But at the same time as the mainstream tries to annex the freshness and frisson of new sexual lifestyles, it is also busy trying to neutralise them. In a piece in the *Daily Mirror*, for example, we are assured that lesbian chic doesn't have to involve actual sex with other women, merely a "more liberated attitude". With this sleight of hand, lesbianism becomes a heterosexual activity, and one that conveniently doesn't involve the rejection of men.

Which brings me back to Sharon. In a recent interview, she says she is tired of "symbolising" a kind of sex she doesn't "believe in". But what kind of sex she means is anybody's guess. Lesbian sex? Het sex? Sex that involves ice-picks? Or maybe it's sex in general that she is tired of representing. Who knows? Only her next movie will tell us for sure.

"Sliver" opens in the UK on 3 September

Jonathan Romney strikes gold in the badlands of no-budget movies

For a few dollars less

How long is a shoestring? In terms of US independent cinema, there's short, and then there's short. Leslie Harris' *Just Another Girl on the IRT*, released a couple of weeks ago, was shot in 11 days for $100,000. Nick Gomez took 12 days to make his *Laws of Gravity*, but that was on only $38,000. And Robert Rodriguez, director of *El Mariachi*, took 14, on a mere $7,000 budget.

Stated like this, there's a certain machismo to independent no-budget film-making. You're reminded of the *Monty Python* Yorkshiremen sketch ("You call that poor? When I were a lad . . . "). But you can see how a tight rein and an against-the-odds bravura might further a wonderfully sober cut-the-crap intensity. *Laws of Gravity* (at the Gate Cinema from 20 August) certainly benefits from a rare urgency, although it's a fairly redundant exercise: a homage to the spirit of early Scorsese

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Packing heat on the movie breadline: Carlos Gallardo in "El Mariachi"

that takes us into such familiar territory that it's hard to see what Nick Gomez intended (other than paying off the debt of influence).

This is the sort of film that tends to be hailed as a practically live newscast from the street. Really, it's more like a tourist visit, a cheap holiday in other people's . . . not misery, exactly, but certainly apathy. Two Brooklyn petty crooks half-heartedly scrabble for a living—a little shoplifting, stolen goods, and driving their infinitely sharper, more cynical girlfriends up the wall.

The film aims for a raw feel by adopting the economical, but aesthetically knee-jerk, method of hand-held camera and long takes, eschewing cuts for wobbling, sea-sick swerves. The stylistic tricks establish themselves from the outset—the machine-gun cacophony of the dialogue; the constant, almost subliminal throb of ragga and salsa; the way that something interesting occasionally breaks out right at the back of the shot, like a nasty marital struggle blossoming in the margins of a picnic group photo.

We're in *Mean Streets* all over again, right down to the bar brawl. The tetchy buddy pairing (one smart, vaguely noble guy, one slightly dumber loose cannon) recalls the Keitel-De Niro pairing from that film, with the addition of a nemesis on the sidelines—a chilling turn by Paul Schulze as Frankie, a grinning piece of psychosis nearly as memorable as Joe Pesci in *GoodFellas*.

What keeps the film aloft is the sheer energy and conviction of the acting. This is so naturalistic you're inclined to wonder whether it even counts as improvisation—maybe they were just speeded up to the gills all the time. How much change can you get out of "Fuck you—Yeah, well, fuck *you* too" in-your-facery? Somehow, this cast gets a lot, and Gomez wisely allows them to combust into fits of distracted giggling when the mood takes them.

I'd be quicker to write the film off if this hormono-adrenal feverishness didn't make me wonder why British low-budget films invariably fall down on the sub-RADA stiltedness in their acting. You simply can't imagine a British cast letting rip in this way. Maybe we don't have the right drugs.

I would also love to imagine a British film with the DIY nerve of *El Mariachi*. The recent low-budget British success, *Leon the Pig Farmer*, coasted by largely on people's amazement that it got made at all, but it made the mistake of earnestly wanting to look like a "proper" film. *El Mariachi* has no such qualms. It's a genuine guerrilla attack on the canons of "proper" film, and its apparently amateurish roughness is the result of a draconian strategy. Robert Rodriguez could only do single takes, so he had to cut it in his head.

Rodriguez financed the film by checking into a hospital as a guinea pig in a cholesterol research project, then cast the man in the next bed as his villain (he didn't speak Spanish, so he had to speak his lines phonetically). There was no time for the actors to learn a script, so no one ever *saw* one—they just learned their lines one by one for each take.

El Mariachi (in London cinemas from 20 August) is a comic strip of a movie, the sort that would be drawn by a one one-armed *bandido* who thought Sergio Leone was a wimp and Peckinpah a brand of chicken seed. Spoken in Spanish and shot in the small Mexican town of Acuña, it's a guacamole Western that tilts genially at gunplay conventions.

A super-macho baddie breaks out of prison to revenge himself on an effete, cellphone-toting *gringo* crime boss. The killer carries his arsenal in a red-lined guitar case, so it's not surprising that when a wandering innocent hits town, hoping to set up in business as a ballad singer, he's mistaken for the bad guy (this film's as strong on daft coincidence as the slicker, but similarly spirited *Red Rock West*). By the end, the *ingénu* will have won his spurs as a taciturn hard case ready for a sequel—which Rodriguez has been signed to make for $6 million.

Its rough edges offset by a lightning cutting style, *El Mariachi* is a genuinely lawless film, because it simply has no time to take itself too seriously. If the sombre smalltown mood drags, Rodriguez will just throw in some ridiculous gag, like a sequence with a sombrero-wearing idiot who cracks his knuckles resoundingly, then performs some cheesey atrocities on a Casio keyboard.

El Mariachi can fairly be acclaimed as a cultural triumph: a Spanish-language film that seemed destined for oblivion, making miraculous inroads into the mainstream arena. It's distributed by Columbia, who proved a receptiveness for low-budget work when they backed *Boyz 'n the Hood*.

This is a sharp ironic take on the standard Hollywood images of Mexico as badland-over-the-border, but played with one foot each side of the divide. And it has an agreeable Luddite tinge, not only in Rodriguez's scissors-and-paste methods, but in its theme of a hero out to maintain the tradition of balladeering: one man, six strings and his wits against the idiocy of Casio-toting tourist-pleasers. The result is as heady as a shot of mescal, and you don't have to worry about swallowing the worm either.

Mark Prendergast meets the creators of a multi-media blend of faiths

Sounds of harmony

Music to cross the Middle Eastern divide: Steve Reich and Beryl Korot

It's an age-old chestnut: whether music and politics mix. Some would say they once did, back in the 1960s when people listened. Punk could be viewed as fake revolt, an aberration between one hippie cult and another. Live Aid was real enough. But what happened after? Just more posturing?

Leading by example works best, from the European Dadaists to the situationism of Factory Records and U2's mildly subversive Zooropa. Over in "serious" music, Stravinsky caused riots in 1913 with *Le Sacré du Printemps*, and 60 years later Steve Reich got some very negative feedback when he premiered his brand of minimalism at Carnegie Hall.

Reich is now one of the world's foremost composers and experimental musicians. A 56- year-old New Yorker, he was first a philosophy student, then a music student with Philip Glass at the Julliard School. He went to the West Coast during the 1960s and met the guru-like Terry Riley, who was interested in composing around one key.

Reich guested on *In C*, the first famous minimalist piece, and returned to New York. There he fiddled around with tape, made some repeating voice pieces that later influenced Brian Eno to become a producer, and eventually got funding to go to Ghana in 1970.

He found the rhythmic nature of that country's music "a giant pat on the back" for his ideas. "I'm reading a book at the moment," he says warmly, "it's called *Polyrhythms in Central African Music*. It's got 600 pages of African horn music and is a source

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Where Old Testament meets New Technology: in "The Cave"

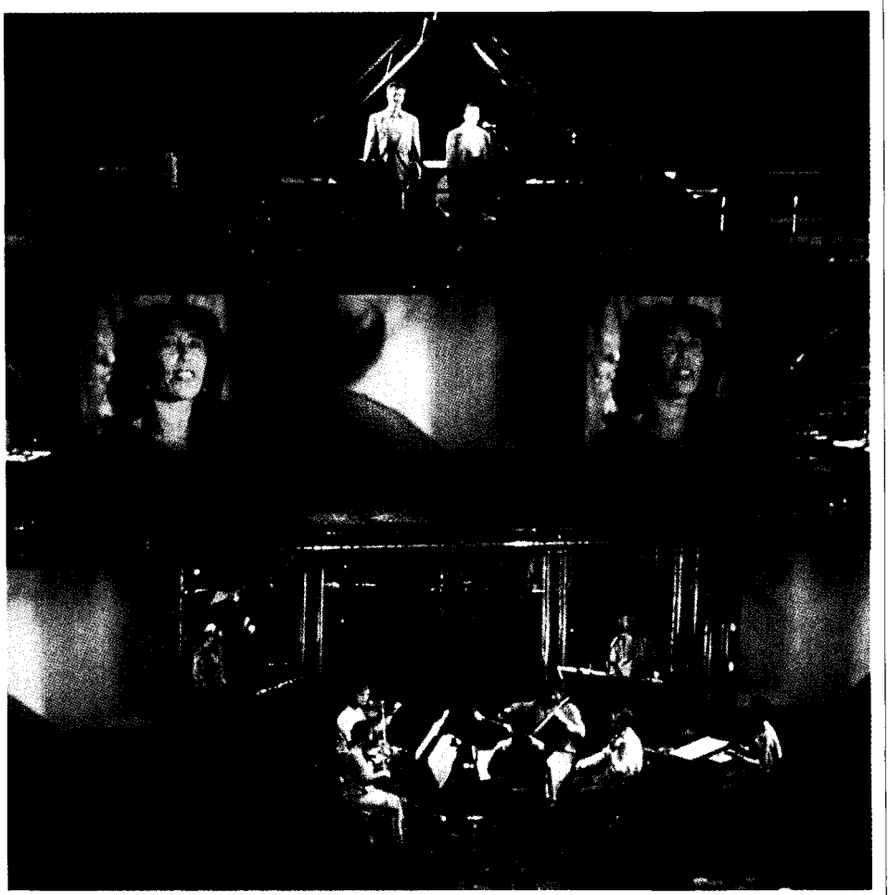
of inspiration." Reich eventually pooled resources with the Kronos Quartet in 1988 for a speech-melody piece entitled *Different Trains*, and Kronos recorded African music four years later.

All in all, Reich pulls his ideas from a different palette to most composers. Speech-melody, whether it be the poetry of William Carlos Williams or the Hebrew of the Old Testament, has always been introduced into the fabric of his slyly hypnotic and intensely detailed sound. Today, he could be one of the few composers really equipped to make a political statement through music, with a shout that has already echoed around the concert halls of Europe and America.

The Cave is his latest creation; or rather, collaboration, for it involves the flat-screen video work of Beryl Korot. Four years in the workshop, *The Cave* is a million-dollar dream come true for them both. After years of Hebrew studies in New York, the pair felt that the Old Testament could be radically translated into "music theatre".

Journeys were made to Israel, where 25 miles south of Jerusalem lies the cave of Hebron, the only place of dual Muslim/ Jewish worship in the world. In there is buried Abraham and his two sons Isaac and Ishmael, reputedly the joint ancestors of the Bible and the Koran.

Interviews were conducted with Arabs and



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Jews about the meaning of the place to them. Reich translated the sounds into music, Korot the images into multi-screen video data. What results is a piece for 17 musicians that lasts just under three hours, with breaks. The musicians follow the speech patterns of various Jews in Act One, before the five screens fill with images inside the shrine and A minor drones are synched to the sound of prayer.

Act Two develops the theme through the Koran, as the sacred text is sung and the ensemble follow it. Act Three moves over to America, where various interviewees (ranging from the astronomer Carl Sagan to a Hopi Indian) respond to questions regarding the meaning of Arab and Israeli lore.

Reich sees this as about "ignorance and removal": the way people normally view alien religious cultures from the comfort of their consumerist worlds. Korot contends that "peace is a religious value". Certainly, the sounds of Hebrew cantillation and the Muslim prayers draw one into a sense of divinity. By the end of both the first two acts, the panning of the cameras inside the mosque at Hebron, droning chants and ambient ensemble music lull one into that "peace".

Beryl Korot was founding editor of *Radical Software* video magazine during the early 1970s. She argues that "the interaction of the material on screen so precisely with the performance music has never been done before. It's very frontal and allied to text . . . at the beginning the typed letters are rhythmically synched to Steve's percussion. Yet in the third act, we leave the texts of history behind, and everything becomes very inventive and personal because of the west."

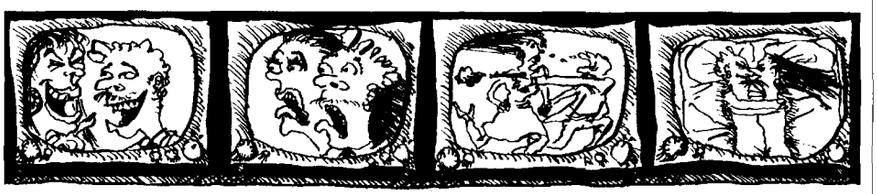
Suggestions that U2 are currently doing something quite similar with the Zooropa tour are dismissed. "With *The Cave* every single image and every single melody came out of the documentary material. That kind of tightness never existed before. It's not the kind of rock and roll *gestalt* that came out of the 1960s and is still used today. This is focused, it's frontal, it's flat."

For Reich, the work is a vindication of his belief that "composing opera in this day and age is plain ridiculous". (This stance itself reflects the fierce competitiveness that exists between him and fellow minimalist Philip Glass.) "It shows that I'm interested in things, and would like to bring them into the music. I thought, yes you could do it with vocal music: hence *Different Trains*; but even better, why not do it with videotape? The notion of the relationship between the video and the music is not a poetic one but a literal one."

When it comes to the politics of the piece, Reich's views are succinct. "When we were out there we had this potent feeling of these two cultures in conflict who somehow share a religious culture. The tension in Middle East politics is reflected in the tension of the first two acts. We felt a great sense of relief when we could bring it back home, that relief you can sense in Act Three."

Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's "The Cave" is at the Royal Festival Hall from 18 to 23 August

JACI STEPHEN



The apostles of abstinence are hogging the screen again. Brace yourself for the return of The Celibates

A new craze is hitting the streets. They're mean, they're keen, they're hungry for power. You won't know them by their looks, you won't sense them until it's too late. Suddenly, when it's dark and you think you're safe from the forces of evil, they'll pounce. They'll enter your bedroom, turn off the light and pull back the duvet. But in hell, nobody can hear you scream. Watch out for The Celibates, at a bedroom near you.

Yes, it's that time of the year again, when the people who haven't been laid all summer start to get twitchy and realise that it's nearly autumn; they could again be spending Christmas alone. They tell themselves that what they have really been going through is a powerful, self-disciplined period of sexual inactivity, rather than an imposed period of frustration. Worse than telling themselves, they tell us as well.

Now, I'm all for people having freedom of choice in life, particularly when the choices they make are of a private nature and have little or no effect on society as a whole, and there are some good cases to be made for celibacy (they tell me). But the media attention now lavished on The Celibates, most recently in *Everyman* (BBC1, Sunday), is enough to send the rest of us onto the streets bonking anything that stands still long enough for us to do so.

Sexually active individuals don't witter on about the reasons behind their choosing how, when and where they Do It (women's magazines may, although the programme was way off mark in citing *Marie Claire* as typical). So why should members of the celibate fraternity feel they have the right to tell us why they have chosen a chaste existence? When was the last (or even the first) time you saw a newspaper article headed "Why I have sex"?

Everyman wheeled out professional celibate Liz Hodgkinson once more to tell us the story of how she and her husband Neville decided to have a break from sex. If there is the remotest chance any reader has not yet heard this tedious tale, told either through Ms Hodgkinson's books or her journalism, here's a summary.

Liz and Neville, married for 13 years, decided to have a "rest" from sex: a rest, says Liz, "so liberating and empowering we didn't go back to it". After seven or eight years, the relationship, according to Neville, had improved considerably. So much so, that they finally broke up.

Neville is now at the Brahma Kumaris spiritual university, seeking enlightenment. From what we could gather, he sits in rooms meditating with a lot of shiny-faced people who either haven't yet heard of Estée Lauder's T-Zone oil control, or else are in a genuine state of rapture.

Banned at the university are smoking, alcohol, meat and sex, but Neville loves it and plans never to have sex again. There are "the seeds of the destruction of the beauty of a relationship when the sexual act is present", he says. I didn't get it either.

Liz, on the other hand, hasn't ruled it out, though you can't help wondering what being married to Neville for 13 years would do to a girl. Ms Hodgkinson's claim is that during the period of marital celibacy, she was subject to none of the "bad" emotions like "jealousy, possessiveness, lust . . . " Lust? That's a negative emotion?

The programme's failure to explore the nature of lust and what you do when your head is arguing with your body meant the failure of its case. In many instances, celibacy may be desirable but it ain't easy. What are you supposed to do when your body craves sexual satisfaction? Suck a quarter of bonbons?

It's a great freedom, says Liz, when you don't have to think of "someone's sexual demands" (for heaven's sake, tell us where the guys are whose sexual demands stretch to more than a post-coital pizza). But that doesn't make lust a negative emotion: surely the negativity is in the other person not wishing to requite the feeling. Neither is lust always a controllable emotion (thank goodness), and Hodgkinson's belief that it is makes me suspicious of her ideology as a whole.

Sex doesn't have to come with all the emotional trappings that the celibate converts seem to assume it does. Sex *per se* is never a problem; it's the conditioning individuals bring to it that causes the traumas.

Carol Viera, an actress who appeared in the programme, used her period of celibacy to examine the kinds of relationships she wanted with men, having found that each time she became sexually involved she turned into a needy clinger-on. Her story was the most convincing. Many of The Celibates are doing exactly what they accuse the media of: concentrating on sex to the exclusion of all else, the only difference being that their attention is focused on not having it.

Sex, in the end, tells us about people; people don't tell you about sex. Most celibates just look as if they need a good fuck.

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The cultural cringe

THE ERN MALLEY AFFAIR
Michael Heyward
Faber & Faber, £15.99

Robert Carver

First, a short test: was the following poem, entitled "Dürer, Innsbruck, 1495", written by a) W B Yeats b) Dylan Thomas c) Ezra Pound d) W H Auden?

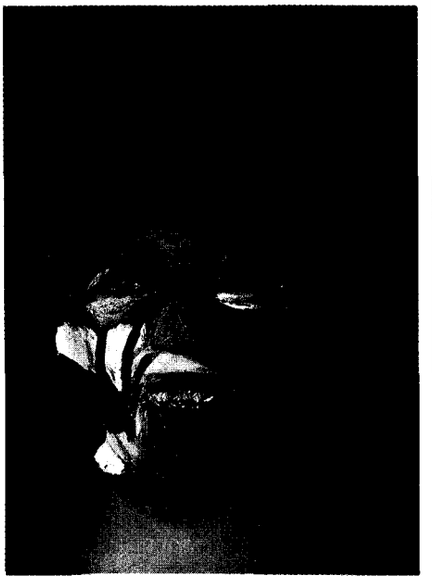
I had often, cowled in the slumberous heavy air,
Closed my inanimate lids to find it real,
As I knew it would be, the colourful spires,
And painted roofs, the high snows glimpsed at the back,
All reversed in the quiet reflecting waters—
Not knowing then that Dürer perceived it too.
Now I find that once more I have shrunk
To an interloper, robber of dead men's dream.
I had read in books that art was not easy
But no one warned that the mind repeats
In its ignorance the vision of others. I am still
The black swan of trespass on alien waters.

The answer is: none of the above, but Ernest Lalor Malley (b. Liverpool, 1918, d. Melbourne, 1943), who died aged 25 of Grave's disease after a rootless, feckless life in which he produced one slim volume of just 17 poems, *The Darkening Ecliptic*. From Sydney, in 1943, his sister sent the manuscript to Max Harris, an energetic 22-year-old Adelaide student who edited *Angry Penguins*, Australia's sole modernist, avant-garde review.

Harris immediately saw the genius of the Malley oeuvre. Encouraged by his rich patron John Reed and the painter Sidney Nolan, he produced a special commemorative edition of Malley's poems, copiously illustrated by Nolan. Australia had at last discovered its Rimbaud, a doomed genius who, looking premature death in the face, had written his bitter, brilliantly modernist lines of defiance.

The only problem was that Ern Malley, as he was known, did not exist. He had been invented by two unknown Sydney poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, egged on by their mentor, A D Hope. "Ern Malley" was, they claimed, a complete hoax, cobbled together at random to prove that modernism was all tosh.

The popular press in Australia, England and America fell upon the Malley affair and hooted with laughter—all those long-haired literary types shown up and taken down a peg or two. Herbert Read and T S Eliot rallied round Max Harris, the former publicly, the latter privately. The law stepped in and Harris—not the authors—was prosecuted in



The modernist who never was: Sidney Nolan's impression of Ern Malley

South Australia for Malley's "obscenity" and fined, forcing Harris and the magazine to move to Melbourne.

For years, Ern Malley has been a symbol in Australia both of pretentious artiness and of philistine repression. Heyward's well-researched and intelligent book gives us the full story, which is more complicated than anyone supposed. McAuley and Stewart were not merely a pair of philistine conservatives; they were both failed modernist poets themselves, who had saturated themselves in Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Laforgue in the original, as well as Pound, Eliot and Dylan Thomas.

They were writing their parody with satirical intent, as insiders who no longer believed. They resented Max Harris' high profile as well as his poor verse, for he was a showman: Jewish, mercurial, with a rich backer and in the public eye. McAuley and Stewart were university scholarship boys from working-class Catholic Sydney who had failed to make any mark, abandoning modernist poetry in disillusionment after years of apprenticeship. They invented not just the poems of Malley but Malley himself, precisely the sort of *poète maudit* they knew Harris would fall for.

But, as many poets and critics have pointed out, Malley's poems are simply too good to be pure pastiche. Although at first claiming they had been written in an afternoon, the authors later admitted they had incorporated lines and fragments from their own, now despised modernist poetic past. In other words, they really were Ern Malley after all.

"Dürer, Innsbruck, 1495" was a complete poem, written years before by McAuley himself. It is deeply telling. The black swan is the Australian would-be artist, who having imagined himself into European art from his slumberous Australian beach, finds to his dismay that Dürer has been there 500 years before him—and painted it already. Thus the Australian will always be an interloper in imaginative art, that European province.

Ern Malley is in the great Australian knocking tradition: part of the cultural cringe that comes from colonial and convict self-contempt, with a resulting overvaluation of "overseas" culture. Australians can bear anything except pretentiousness: that deserves the full sentence.

Malley also belongs to the small wars between Sydney and Adelaide; Sydney, the rambunctious convict town with strong Irish larrikin traditions, where you don't just call a spade a spade—you tell the bloody truth, mate, and spit it out: the cow's a fucken' shovel. Adelaide—convict-free, genteel, Anglophile, straitlaced—plays Edinburgh to Sydney's Glasgow.

McAuley and Stewart never produced anything with as much fire after Ern Malley. Both embraced religion and mysticism, McAuley hard-right Catholic cold-war politics and Stewart Buddhist quietism in Kyoto. If all this palaver about literary experiment surprises, one should remember that, in a country where 99 per cent are permanently out to lunch, literally and metaphorically, Australian intellectuals take themselves very seriously. If they lug the nation's philistinism behind them like a ball and chain, no wonder their cerebral muscles bulge with overdevelopment.

British readers may find all this a storm, not so much in a colonial teacup as in a teaspoon. But Ern Malley was Australia's trials of Oscar Wilde and *Lady Chatterley* rolled into one, and a contributing factor in the great exodus of Australian artists and writers in the 1950s and 1960s. Hope, McAuley and their acolytes dominated the literary and university world as effectively as Bob Menzies did the political. Anyone serious about making a mark on a larger stage took Henry Lawson's advice and got out as quickly as possible. The Clive Jameses, Germaine Greers and Jill Nevilles, in London in the 1960s, were all part of Ern Malley syndrome.

Australia was once described as a paradise for English sergeant-majors. More convincingly, Heyward shows a country fearful of risk or novelty, authoritarian and repressive, where even the intellectuals are yahoos. Ern Malley represents the Australians' inability to take themselves seriously, to confront the complexities of the larger world without retreating into facile cynicism.

As Heyward writes: "McAuley stared into the same black hole as Baudelaire and Eliot—and then averted his gaze." From the evidence of *The Darkening Ecliptic*, McAuley and Stewart could have developed into brilliant imaginative poets had they kept their nerve. Ern Malley was the best modernist poet Australia ever did—and didn't have.

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Ted's kids

APPLE FIRE: THE HALESWORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL ANTHOLOGY
Jill Pirrie (editor)
Bloodaxe Books, £7.95

Peter Forbes

Good news stories from the education world are about as few and far between as trains on the Barnet branch of the Northern Line, but here one comes, headlights blazing and bound for glory. Jill Pirrie's work at Halesworth Middle School, Suffolk, is already quite famous, but in case you haven't heard: since 1987, a disproportionate number of prizewinners in national children's poetry competitions have come from this one small school. Now Bloodaxe, the country's most innovative poetry publisher, has taken the unusual step of producing a book of the 11-13-year-old children's work.

What's the secret, everyone wants to know. Can any teacher learn the method or is she a one-off, a genius? It has to be noted that there is a certain amount of circularity involved in the acclaim she has received. In his foreword, Edward Blishen tells us that every year "a set of judges, chaired by Ted Hughes, grapple as best they can with an astonishment": at finding the primacy of Halesworth school in the entries. But Jill Pirrie makes it clear that her methods are almost entirely Hughesian.

So the poetry is of one kind: rural, elemental, concerned with the metaphysical signature of animals, plants and things in the countryside. By the same token, it is unconcerned with metrical matters, the city, technology or personal relations (not entirely true of the children: there are some touching poems for schoolfriends).

Despite this, Jill Pirrie provocatively asserts that: "It is when children have learnt to make connections through leaps of imagination that they are best equipped for a technological age. These are the children who will write clear, correct reports, give and receive coherent instructions, and, most importantly, make their own unique contribution to an increasingly sophisticated society."

She is right, in that the Hughes method eschews all that is superfluous and genteel. It teaches fidelity to the real nature of things and economy with language: nouns and active verbs are favoured; adjectival pile-ups and passive constructions are out.

But this method is crying out to be applied to that sophisticated technological society glanced at by Jill Pirrie. If poetry were to be seen as a rural preserve in a country where less than 4 per cent of the population are involved in primary production, her work would be of limited value. Of course, Halesworth is a rural school, but these children *have* had their imaginations stimulated.

It should also be said that the Hughes method is quite easy for any intelligent person to learn, let alone children at the golden age in the hands of an inspiring teacher. But what is good about some of these poems is that they don't come over as pastiche Hughes. Or, if they do, they are fine examples; for instance, Emma Walkey's "Snapdragon": "He is a cavalier's doffed hat, a flamboyant feather". What these children have learned best is a sureness with simile. In Robert Adcock's "Nicholas", we find: "His foot swings/like a clock's pendulum./The foot makes contact/and the ball bobs/for a short distance/like a car using up the last drops of petrol". The line-breaks are well-judged and the mood of the poem ("his mind strengthens from day to day") remarkably mature.

The huge question begged by this book is: what are we going to do with them at 14? If 11-13 is the most receptive age for poetry in the classroom, adolescence is probably the worst time in the whole lifespan. Self-and peer-group consciousness destroys that absorption in the subject that poetry needs. Then come the blandishments of the pop-and-sex machine, with its heavily promoted role models.

In thrall to Ted Hughes they may be at 13, but at 15 it will be to some palely loitering hero of bedsit angst (who will break all of Hughes' Rules)—and that's just the boys. Is there anything we can do to guide these children through the minefield? I have no answer, but I'd love to know what has happened to the first generation to have benefited from Jill Pirrie's passionate introduction to poetry.

Peter Forbes edits "Poetry Review"

Comrades

HARRY POLLITT
Kevin Morgan
Manchester University Press, £40
RAJANI PALME DUTT: A STUDY IN BRITISH STALINISM
John Callaghan
Lawrence & Wishart, £19.99

Francis Beckett

For two decades before the Communist Party's demise last year, it was fashionable in some left-wing circles to talk about it with amused contempt. It was mockingly called conservative by people whose views, shorn of trendy rhetoric, were slightly to the right of John Stuart Mill.

It deserved some of this derision, but not all of it. The CP produced, in Harry Pollitt, one of the most intelligent and likeable socialist politicians of the 20th century. In more recent years, it produced in Mick McGahey the most widely loved and respected trade unionist of modern times.

Its weaknesses were the weaknesses of most European socialist parties. Its interminable discussions about the correct line often sounded like medieval theology. Demands for discipline often came from people who were themselves undisciplined.

These disputes—by no means unique to communists—lead to bitter internecine warfare on the left. Those who still have to be convinced of the case for socialism become bemused and probably alienated spectators.

During the 1931 election, communists broke up meetings of the Independent Labour Party, Labour's left-wing, calling its members "social fascists". In the 1970s, far-left groups targeted communists for special attack. In the early 1980s, the Bennites turned their most vengeful tactics on left-wingers who declined to support Benn's deputy leadership campaign. And it was a bitter internal dispute that finally destroyed the CP.

To these weaknesses, the CP added a weakness all of its own—a weakness that most early communists thought was strength. The CP saw the defence of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 as its first duty. Harry Pollitt put it with characteristic directness: "Workers like me and all those around me had won power, had defeated the boss class."

The CP was always at its best when it got away from theorising and got on with organising. In the mid-1930s, after half a decade of arid theoretical bickering, it pulled itself together and became a focus for anti-Fascism. Since everyone else seemed inclined to ignore British Fascism and hope it would go away, East Enders especially rallied to the CP.

In the 1960s and 1970s, communists established themselves as the most effective and disciplined force in the trade unions. More remarkably, they did it without arousing too much hostility from other trade unionists. They were handy people in a tight spot, they knew how to run a dispute and, unlike many others, they knew when not to run one. That side of the CP's legacy will still have a useful part to play in the British left, long after the bitter sectarianism has disappeared.

Harry Pollitt and Rajani Palme Dutt were the CP's most important figures, and symbolised its two personalities. Pollitt was general secretary from 1928 until 1956 (with a brief period out of office in 1940 for failing to do the required about turn after the Hitler-Stalin pact). He was a trade-union organiser with deep respect for Marxist theorists but no interest in becoming one himself.

Dutt was a theorist, not an organiser. He was never happier than when picking the bones of someone's political position and checking that it was sound through and through.

These two men shaped the CP, which was born in 1919 and died in 1992. A large part of the idealism of those generations was harnessed to their strengths and weaknesses. This summer sees new biographies of both, and each reflects the man. Kevin Morgan's *Harry Pollitt* is short, accessible and direct. That makes for good biography if the writer likes the subject, and Morgan clearly feels the affection Pollitt seems to have inspired in most people who knew him. And the problem with John Callaghan's *Rajani Palme Dutt* is that Callaghan, like those who knew Dutt, does not seem to feel any affection for him.

The book, like its subject, is lengthy and scholarly, especially about India. There is as

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much about Dutt's ideas, and as little about the man himself, as you get from Dutt's own writings. The difference is that Callaghan has taken the trouble to revise his work. Dutt himself wrote far too much, and what he wrote desperately needed a good sub-editor.

In the end, I feel as frustrated by Callaghan's book as I think I would have felt after a conversation with Dutt himself. Dutt spent his whole life trying to justify every twist and turn of Soviet policy. He had the dubious honour of being the only person in Britain whom Stalin really trusted. He was not a fool: he had great intellectual ability. He was not corrupt: he was rather ascetic. I want to know what made him tick.

Francis Beckett's book about the Communist Party is to be published by John Murray

Word hordes

THE LAST BURDEN
Upamanyu Chatterjee
Faber & Faber, £14.99

D J Taylor

Heavens knows where the literary prize pundits get their tips, but for the past month or so Upamanyu Chatterjee's name has been flitting about the air-currents of Dean Street gossip as a contender for this year's Booker. The most cursory inspection of his novel explains why: dense, exotic, with a souped-up prose style to match, it sits alongside domestic competition like a hoopoe becalmed on a lawnful of sparrows.

Inevitably, such advance recommendation has a damaging effect. Just as some people were disposed to question the merits of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*—a rather similar animal, as it happens—simply because of the vainglorious manner in which it was promoted, so one might think there are better ways of serving Chatterjee's interests than grinding on about "unsurpassed richness", "one of India's most important living writers", and so forth.

Such curmudgeonliness would be a pity, for despite some considerable *longueurs* and stylistic extravagances, *The Last Burden* turns out to be a highly entertaining novel. Set in contemporary India, but darting backwards and forwards over a period of nearly 30 years, it might be described as a meditation on family life, a series of reflections on a sprawling communal history framed by present crisis.

Summoned a thousand kilometres to his mother's deathbed and thrown once more into the company of his father Shyamanand and elder brother Burfi, Jamun, the novel's focus, finds himself deluged by an uncorked tide of family tension. Theoretically assembled to watch over Urmila's passing in a spirit of amity, the household soon degenerates into an endless round of bickering, in which personal foibles are never quite extinguished by the advancing sorrow. Shyamanand, for instance, is prostrated by the expenses of his wife's medical treatment, while Jamun finds his ambivalent attitude to his parents repeatedly exposed: having decided in his teens that they are different from other people, he can never really forgive them.

Amid this atmosphere of nervous anticipation, the slightest stimulus is enough to twitch a sinewy thread of reminiscence, rarely with happy results. Watching his nephews at play, Jamun remembers his old ayah, her death from tuberculosis and the strategems devised by his parents to evict her from the house. Encountering Burfi and his wife leaving for a school PTA meeting, he is transported to the one occasion on which Urmila and Shyamanand turned up on his behalf, and the aching embarrassment—"they had appeared grey, wrinkled before their time, overtired, careworn with themselves"—of their presence.

Oddly, the effect of this surfeit of memory stirs only incomprehension. Jamun reflects that he has not known his parents "*at all*, not their essentials—their past, who they yearned for at 14, and what they dreamed of at 31—the level of their humanness."

In some ways, however, the content of these revelations is less important than their form. *The Last Burden* is being sold on the strengths of its prose style. A raree show it is, too, what with the copious use of words like "turgescent" and "educe" and the glamorous metaphors about "contagion". Chatterjee's protagonists are loquacious, oracular, indomitable: their monologues occupy many a discursive page.

Elsewhere, a fastidious striving for exactitude mingles indiscriminately with passages that are merely overwritten. Milk from a cactus drips "like blood", which is just off-key: cactus milk doesn't remotely resemble blood. Urmila, staked to her hospital bed, is rendered thus: "On the dun blanket, derelict, an overblown and squelching forearm, bluish . . . A frightful convulsive breathing; like being riveted within the breast of a beast by its amplified death throes. Her eyelids flicker unremittingly, unsettled moths." This is imaginatively observed, but somehow at the end of it poor Urmila seems less important than the language used to glorify her suffering.

Where Chatterjee's prose fireworks succeed, though, they do so triumphantly, as when the sight of Urmila hooked up to her hospital tubes resembles "an aerial vista of a lattice of motorways and bypasses", or shreds of charred paper prance in the breeze "like wee, black-cowled, terror-crazed Inquisitors". The last phrase is spectacularly good.

Given the preceding glooms and tensions, the vaguely redemptive finale, in which Shyamanand responds to his wife's death by coming to live with Jamun and his dubious mistress, is a welcome surprise. Greeting Kasibai on the station platform, Shyamanand waves his hand over her head "in uncertain blessing . . . not a bad beginning, reflects Jamun". And not a bad ending either.

D J Taylor's study of the post-1945 novel, "After the War", is due soon from Chatto

Lyric drama

MUSIC FOR GLASS ORCHESTRA
Grace Andreacchi
Serpent's Tail, £8.99
THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF
Kathryn Davis
Hamish Hamilton, £9.99

Roz Kaveney

Prose about other arts is always an approximation. If there were a vocabulary that precisely captured the sensory impact of music, novels would have replaced symphonies. Music, though, because it's in a sense a language and often, through song and music-drama, allied to literature, has often seemed the art that would first yield to the imperialism of modernist prose.

But music already has a prose language of its own, that of technique and musicology: an intensely academic language, hermetic to those not compelled to use it. Novelists have either to use it and, rarely being musicians themselves, risk getting it wrong, or dispense with it in favour of metaphors that risk clichés and pretentiousness. Ultimately, C major is C major and not the brightest facet of a crystal or the pinnacle of a wave.

It is hard enough to write about extant music, where there is a consensus on what is described. Grace Andreacchi's nameless heroine, an American in Paris, is mistress to an international concert violinist beaten up by his restaurateur wife. Her meditations on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner are one strand in a free-flowing dream-life.

The sequence when she decamps to Venice and is shown round the palazzo of a *simpático* vampire with a monstrous child harpsichordist for a pet sits more easily on the page than does the music. Andreacchi is less using language than making allusion to other uses of it: this is a novel that glorifies in unoriginality. The post-Angela Carter language of nightmare seduction is more obviously a *lingua franca* than the post-Thomas Mann talks-through about violin sonatas.

This is less a novel, in fact, than a glittering heap of rubble. Andreacchi has tried, and not succeeded, to stick together in coherent form the best bits of old notebooks. It is entertaining enough, though, because we get clear flashes of an interesting intelligence at play.

Kathryn Davis' passionate *The Girl Who Trod On A Loaf*, for all its elaborate structure of framing narratives and flashbacks, is also more interesting for intelligence than overall finish. Davis is simply more interested in some aspects of this novel—about the life of a proto-feminist, modernist Danish-born composer and her relationship with an American admirer—than in others.

Sam, the Don Giovanni figure of the framing plot, is not present enough in the book for us to understand why Frances, the protégée, and Helle, the composer, respectively love and kill him. Frances' children are too often

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merely cute. In default of successful seduction, the relationship between the two women centres on the children, but their effective absence weakens its impact.

Among the ironies of Davis' ultimate failure with structure is the fact that she does a stunning job of recreating, say, Copenhagen during the first world war, while her picture of small-town America is cliché-bound. Sometimes you are better off borrowing settings from great art—Davis acknowledges her debt to Karen Blixen by having Helle set one of her tales—than transcribing your own experience. But Frances, the amoral presence whose emotional education Helle exists to further, is an interesting enough voice, so one cannot entirely regret the decision to construct the book around her.

The real interest of the novel lies nonetheless in Helle, whose operas and other works have some success in the interwar years. But Davis misses several tricks by attributing the decline of her career more to post-second world war depression than to the musical atmosphere of 1950s New York.

Davis is fascinated by opera, and describes several of Helle's works. These set pieces are gorgeous, though they read more like the fantasies of a frustrated liberettist than what it would actually be like to sit through them. Helle educates Frances in a model of intuitive, rash raging womanhood. She must be a composer rather than a poet, because Davis needs to make her art not wholly verbal. With some success, Davis recycles the problem of writing about music as a feminist point about whom the nailing-down of unspoken meaning serves in the first place.

Mind's music

A COMPANION TO THE SYMPHONY
Robert Layton (editor)
Simon & Schuster, £30

Paul Binding

The symphony, wrote the critic Hugh Ottaway, is to be thought of as cousin to the novel. Beethoven and Scott, the two great men who translated their respective forms into something inclusive, powerful, popular and dominant, were born within a year of each other (1770 and 1771). Their legacy is absolutely immense, not forgetting that born of reaction against them.

Ottaway went on to argue that the symphony, like the novel, is essentially a humanist document, whatever the creeds of the composers themselves. It is the fruit of a secular age of increasing material prosperity. The conflicts that the symphony presents and attempts to resolve relate to the establishment of the individual within a complex, if not pluralist society. And it's true that we can find a home for ourselves in the struggles and reconciliations of such symphonies as Brahms' Third or Dvorak's *New World*, just as we can in novels by George Eliot or Hardy.

Until perhaps the 1960s, and the concert-going public's reappraisal of Mahler, the conventional view of the symphony was this: after Beethoven there was a certain creative diffidence about the form, shared but eventually overcome by Brahms, Beehoven's true heir, and the more lyrical, less intellectual Dvorak. After them the spirit of Beethoven and his nine was to be found in Sibelius, whose seven both conserve and advance the ideal of "pure music", under threat elsewhere.

In an exchange in 1907 between Sibelius and Mahler, quoted in Robert Leyton's new compendium, the former praised the symphony for its "severity of style and the profound logic that created an inner connection between all the motifs". "No," said Mahler, "the symphony must be like the world. It must embrace everything."

The Mahlerian symphony is a vast hold-all; a manifestation of the self, with all its trauma and aspirations and strivings. Not for nothing was Mahler a co-citizen of Freud. With the "rediscovery" of Mahler went a reassessment of his fellow-Austrian Bruckner, the Wagnerian of the symphony. His mammoth achievements in the form could be regarded as just as logical and perhaps a truer succession to Beethoven as Brahms'. At the opposite end of Layton's time-scale, the productions of Shostakovitch were indisputably Mahlerian.

To these views of the symphony another has to be added, of which the critic Wilfred Mellers was a proponent. This is that the symphony, using sonata form to advance its theses, belongs irretrievably to a certain phase of western culture. Beethoven and Schubert succeed magnificently because they embodied this phase. After this, the symphony imposed a borrowed language on composers, and authentic work had to be done outside the form. And certainly it is true that the roll-call of composers for whom the symphony was unimportant is impressive: Janacek, Debussy, Ravel, Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Bartók, Britten.

Layton, one of the most distinguished living authorities on the symphony, is opposed to the Mellers' view, though I wish that space could have been given to arguing his case fully. Of the two other rival visions of the symphony, his book presents an interesting and to some extent convincing marriage.

The book propounds the view that after Beethoven there was a bifurcation: Bruckner and Mahler on one branch, and on the other the pure symphonists, seen at their most formidable—and most Beethovenian—in Sibelius and his Scandinavian contemporary, Carl Nielsen. Sibelius and Nielsen pursue the symphony's true purpose of argument about identity and values through totally musical means, and therefore honour music as a language. Perhaps they owe something of their strength to the humanist culture of the Scandinavian countries. Layton is perhaps the leading expert on Scandinavian music. He has not written the chapters on Sibelius and Nielsen themselves (they are both very good, by Philip Coad and David Fanning) but does contribute a fascinating section on Scandinavia after Sibelius and Nielsen.

The sufferer in this overview is Brahms (who suffered even worse at Mellers' hands). As he still provides one of the concert-goer's major confrontations with the symphonic form, it seems rather unjust not to give him a chapter to himself, What's said on him is excellent, but should have been ampler.

When we move towards our own times, we have to deal with why composers choose to write symphonies at all. Why do Robert Simpson and Alun Hoddinott feel such devotion to the form? Have they added to it? But perhaps to complain at the absence of answers to such questions is a little churlish; the discussion of postwar symphonists here is consistently lively and informative, particularly on Sessions, Mennin and Rubbra. Indeed, it turned me at once to the last's wonderful *Fourth Symphony*. This is a most welcome volume.

Latin American culture

Faust among the Inca

Amanda Hopkinson

What could be more appropriate in this UN-declared Year of Indigenous Peoples than a "reading [of] the Native Americas through their literature"? Such is the subtitle of an excellent new study, *Book of the Fourth World* (Cambridge University Press, £40), from **Gordon Brotherston**, now professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Indiana.

Professor Brotherston always manages to stay one step ahead of the rest. At a time (some 20 years ago) when Latin American literature was well into its "boom", he—as reader, then professor in that natural home of Latin American studies, Essex University—was already reintroducing us not only to the prose of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez, but to the less familiar names of Arguedas and Carpentier. His work on poetry, too, intimated that not only had the experience of colonisation and independence given Latin American verse—in whatever European language—a non-European cast, but so had its particular ethnic origins. With a history and a cultural mix quite unlike any in the "mother" countries, Latin America had a literature in variegated shades of Black and Indian, Creole, mulatto and mestizo. However complex, it remained unique.

Here Brotherston reverts to the complexity of these roots, to what's "Indian" throughout the Americas, "Latin" or otherwise. He categorises the "fourth world" as the post-Columbian *quarta orbis*, following the ancient Babylonian *mappamundi*. That set Asia as the great first world, succeeded by the continents of Europe and Africa. Brotherston rapidly notes the antiquity of the pre-

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Columbian civilisations of the "undiscovered" Americas. Quite how much these ancient urban, seafaring and nomadic communities had in common was belatedly excavated in the meetings of indigenous peoples in the run-up to 1992, the 500th anniversary of Columbus' invasion/discovery.

Brotherston remains clearly to the left of this oblique division. Despite the destruction of untold quantities of original records, he has found a wealth of material that brings the early "fourth world" together in an astonishingly harmonious and continuing tradition. So much so that, even in the vivid accompanying images, one discerns traces of modern Haitian artists (such as Basquiat) in North American Indian drawings of Boraro forest spirits, and the cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira in the buffalo series of *High Hawk Winter Comes*.

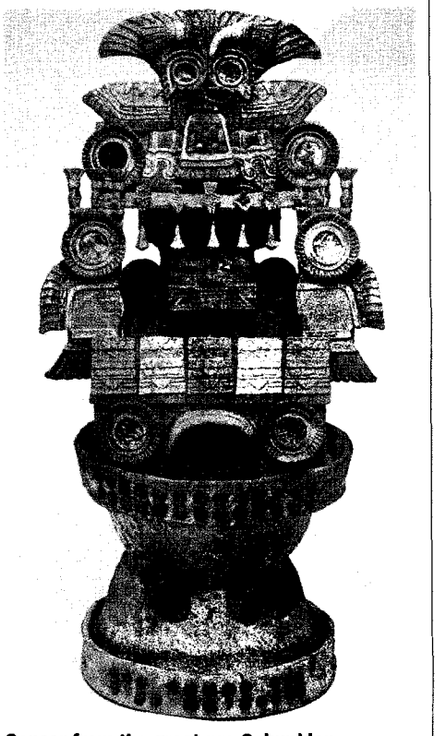
The respect for nature that renders indigenous peoples the proper guardians of the world and, through that patience and understanding, perhaps also of humanity is enhanced by Brotherston's refusal to view literature simply as what has been written. For the peoples of the Americas recorded their lives, myths, histories in a rich variety of ways. Some were fortunately so foreign to the invaders that they escaped attention (such as the Andean *quipu*, or threaded beads or knots); some were so sophisticated, they defied interpretation (such as the Aztec and Maya stone cosmologies); and some continued, as the world over, by word of mouth.

In the end, these last somehow afford the greatest hope. For just as the animal pictograms show the necessary and frequently cruel murder of the creature worshipped, so the "fairy stories" of the region show the violence of human psychology alongside its benign and contemplative aspects as well as any tale collected by Grimm or Perrault.

In an impressive final section on "The Translation Process", the book collates some extraordinarily powerful living legends that have passed through or emerged from Europe. Stories related in the *Arabian Nights* are relocated in the Maya calendar. Faust, according to the Inca, surrenders his soul to the conquistador Pizarro. The "Aztec Aesop" transforms the cock into a turkey, the jackdaw to a parrot, and the fox to a coyote. With universalism such as this, the greatest of all the riddles must be man's capacity for war with himself.

AfroCuba (edited by **Pedro Pérez** and **Jean Stubbs**; Latin America Bureau, £12.99) seeks less to assert universalism than specificity. What is essentially Cuban among the ten million people of this island that Columbus considered the Garden of Eden before playing god and expelling or massacring its indigenous inhabitants?

Following Toussaint l'Ouverture's successful rebellion in neighbouring Haiti in the 1790s, plantation owners transferred their nefarious trades, principally in slaves and sugar, to Cuba. It is now over 50 years since the great Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortíz expounded his theory of "transculturation", to supplant the supremacist idea of the "acculturation" of



Censer from the great pre-Columbian metropolis of Mexico, in "Teotihuacan: art from the city of the gods", edited by Kathleen Berrin and Esther Pasztory (Thames & Hudson, £28)

the majority (black) population by the dominant (white) minority. The true transculturation of a people who developed a wealth of non-native traditions is explored in this anthology by a host of writers across fields ranging from anthropology to visual arts, race to religion, music to mythology. This first comprehensive compilation of an AfroCuban identity is as readable as it is original, edited by the highly successful combination of a Cuban poet and a British academic.

The *Traveller's Literary Companion: South and Central America* (In Print Publishing, £13.95) is an anthology of another kind. The role of travelling companion is intrinsically dangerous; who is to say you won't fall out at the earliest difference of opinion? This is a risk bravely taken by the editor, **Jason Wilson**, as he trawls the literature on and of Latin America from Mexico to Argentina. The antithesis of the *Book of the Fourth World* (not a word out of native American literature here), it contains a largely contemporary rendition of countries often seen often through the eyes of a European or North American foreigner, or an overseas observer. This gives an oddly detached aspect to the selection.

The brevity of each excerpt renders it hard to picture a country, though if you're no longer on speaking terms with your human companion, this literary one is just the right length for reading aloud. Otherwise, it functions best as a resource, cross-indexing history and literature, biography and bibliography. Perhaps it would be better kept in a library than a knapsack, for reference more than reading, and out of the way of dispute.

PRINTOUT

Anoraks away

Boyd Tonkin

Giles Gordon presides over the Triad gangs of Soho and runs a sinister masonic lodge dedicated to the election of Richard Ingrams as Pope . . . Oh well, perhaps not. It's just that London's most conspicuous literary agent lauds Private Eye on the grounds that, while the magazine's stories might be "incorrect in detail", they are "rarely wrong in tone". So he won't mind a bit of hyperbole.

His collected anecdotage, "Aren't We Due A Royalty Statement?" (Chatto & Windus, £16.99) swarms with gossipy detail about "literary, publishing and theatrical folk", some of it well up to Eye standard. Here is a world where the Chinese use "yen", where Granada produces "Newsnight" and—in a touch that recalls Malaprop rather than Hislop—Jeffrey Archer's cash may "swell the coffins of the Tory party". If only, if only.

Reviewers elsewhere will dust off stale comparisons with Mr Pooter, Wallace Arnold and—most predictably—Adrian Mole, whom the author co-parented when he persuaded his client Sue Townsend to turn a radio sketch into a book. Gordon is, of course, a Spectator man to his fingertips (he wept when sacked from the theatre critic's job), but you find a better class of allusion over at what he calls "the old Staggers". With its rapt arias of trivia and thumping recitals of the commonplace, the book in fact resembles the "dictionary of received ideas" Flaubert added to his massacre of the middlebrows, "Bouvard et Pécuchet".

Gordon's dreams revolve around that valetudinarian Valhalla, the Garrick Club. Once a member, he can drink the milk of paradise. Kingsley Amis makes V signs, Derek Nimmo and the omnipresent Donald Sinden strut their stuff over the school dinners. Now among the elect, and agent-by-appointment to Princes Philip, Charles and Andrew, our Boswell can curse chippy "football-dribbling working-class" writers who don't understand that a roomful of pissed old twits acting daft represents the acme of culture. After all, "you cannot enjoy Mozart and choose to wear an anorak". Learn to speak Clubman the Gordon way, and your command of snooty platitudes will keep every application blackball-free.

But what about our hero's literary taste? That strikes me as almost impeccable (although it's a mite cheeky to demand jokes from Saul Bellow). He cultivates talent and shuns mediocrity. So why has such a fine arbiter put his name to this rank midden of snobbery? Perhaps it's because upper-crust Brits turn themselves into droll "characters" and raconteurs as a smokescreen. What really matters to them stays safely private. You could call it Ingrams' Syndrome. Gordon has copped a massive dose. I hope he recovers before another statement arrives.

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ENDGAMES: Weekend Competition

No 3289 Set by Tim Hopkins
An opening first sentence that will guarantee you will never read the second.

Report by Ms de Meaner
Just read these:

It has often been said that Islam is a religion with a well-developed sense of humour about its great men;

All that summer, our father and our uncles raped us every day;

Volger Park was home to 1,500 baby pet dinosaurs.

This is the sort of stuff I had to wade through: reams and reams of sentences that just *begged* the reader to ask for more, if only to explain what was going on. Indeed, I was amazed by the number who thought a sentence from an SF novel would cause the book to be thrown away in disgust. Shame on you.

Finally, spare a thought for the unhappy Keith Flett, who sent in this opening line: "Keith Flett put down his copy of the *New Statesman*, and turned to his word-processor." Granted, I would read no more, but this sort of self-reference has to be *strangled at birth.*

A fiver for each winning entry. Oh and last week's winners all got ten. I just forgot to mention it.

As Pandora gazed from the 14th floor of the executive office suite over the international fashion house she had established in New York, her mind drifted back to her humble beginnings as a bobbin ligger in a Lancashire cotton mill.

R J Pickles

Believe me, this book is going to change your life.

T J Davies

My sister, Jackie Collins, was born on a night full of stars.

J I Martin

Giselle Blightwell was petite, blonde, firm-breasted, dewy-eyed, soft-voiced, elegant, quietly confident, and an authority on contemporary furniture.

Peter Veale

It was in the year 1897 that Nikolai Aleksyeevich Shagalotsky (known to his friends as Kolia and to his closest business acquaintances as Nikolasha) settled with his wife, Anna Nazarovna Zeenaeda, whom he always addressed as Ziuziushka, in the city of St Petersburg, where his maternal uncle, Matvyei Yevgheniy Bogev, and Ziuziushka's cousin, Marfa Yegorovna Voinitskaiva, who insisted on being called Marfoosha, were already well established as manufacturers of fine samovars and balalaikas, in a firm originally owned by Dmitri Kruchich Bolokov, the paternal grandfather of Andrey Andryeevich Boozenbach, whom we shall meet later.

Watson Weeks

"*Pereunt et imputantur*," said Basil, though what he really meant was *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.*

Noel Petty

As the sun was shining, John decided to go for a walk setting out along Church Lane, then up the High Street, along the path by the post office, down Turney Road, left by Mrs Green's, and into Brayley's Meadow.

Tony Black

It's a bit funny, my story, or *hilarieux*, as they say *en France*, but it is the honest ramble, so my wife tells me, anyway, of an innocent *en* his *vacances*, who had the bad luck to commit what the French call, I expect (we do anyway), a *faux pas.*

Bill Greenwell

"A wee deoch an doris," said the bearded Highlander, raising his glass: "Many a mickle makes a muckle, an when all's said an done, one has tae dree one's weird."

Stanley J Sharpless

However long I live, I will never forget that blissful time I spent in Provence.

John Marriott

As Mother Mary Joseph lay on her deathbed, she derived a certain grim satisfaction from the contemplation of her 75 blameless years.

John Stanley

My first incarnation was as a hamster.

Nicholas Murray

The bicycle shed had been constructed with a mild-steel angle-iron frame and covered with asbestos-cement sheets, and George wondered how long it had stood there.

Sid Field

"Miaou, miaou!"

Sara Spain

"I, the Justiciar of Wolftong, hereby banish thee to the bloodlands beyond the Chantigule."

John Garrett

Nelly did not enjoy her first dog show, although it was to be her first step on the long, hard road to becoming Champion Bitch.

Eric Swainson

The unreality of written text, the devolution of sense from ritual signifier to increasingly institutionalised signified, was the basis on which Jacques constructed his life, although he would never use "constructed" in less than its technical sense.

D A Prince

No 3292 Set by Eric the Bird
A new version of an old faithful: misleading advice, please, for members of the judiciary, MI5, MI6, the armed services, the police, or members of the royal household or parliament. As many attempts as you like, and in by 26 August.

GRYPH'S QUIZ

The answers all have something in common

1. International frontier
2. Single speed
3. The Well-tempered Clavier
4. Prospector
5. Nap
6. Scottish rebellion
7. Beginning of life
8. Popular policeman
9. Stormy southern region
10. Answer to life, the Universe, and Everything

Answers below

Quiz answers

All involve forty(-something): 1) 49th Parallel; 2) 45 rpm; 3) "The Forty-eight"; 4) Forty-niner; 5) Forty winks; 6) The '45; 7) Forty; 8) PC49; 9) Roaring Forties; 10) 42. Notes: 3: Set of Bach Preludes; 10: According to the "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"

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CHESS

There have been some excellent new book releases from B T Batsfords. *Winning with the Najdorf* is Danny King's first book (£13.99). The back cover shows a picture of King with his tresses swirling around his shoulders, beaming like some amiable lion (indeed he and I once appeared in a burlesque of the The Wizard of Oz where William Hareton had cast him in that very role). But when playing Black, Danny is apt to display more ferocity than that timorous beast and so the Najdorf suits him well. The blurb points out that the system has remained at the cutting edge of theory for more than three decades, and I recall Michael Stean's observation in his 1970s' monograph that it was difficult to think of any of the world's leading players who had never deployed it.

The format essentially is to approach it from Black's viewpoint and to advocate a particular set-up versus White's variety of sixth moves. King writes in a casual, almost racy patter, and one of his priorities for Black comes across clearly: don't get mated. With this in mind, most of his recommendations sidestep the most threatening formations for White, hence against 6.f4, 6 . . . e5 is out, and four quick White crushes are supplied as the case against.

Personally, I found his most interesting proposal to be Austrian International Master Georg Danner's 8 . . . Qa5!? in the 6.Bg5 line.

White: Freitag; Black: Danner, Oberwart Open 1991
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg e6 7.f4 Be7 8.Qf3 Qa5!? 9.0-0-0 Bd7!? 10.Be2 . . . On 10.e5 comes 10 . . . dxe5 11.fxe5 Nc6! **10 . . . Nc6 11.Nb3** . . . All Danner's opponents have retreated the Knight. On 11.Rhe1 Black can play 11 . . . Nxd4 12.Rxd4 and now either 12 . . . Rc8 or 11 . . . Bc6 look fine for him. **11 . . . Qc7 12.Rhe1 h6 13.Bh4 g5!** A familiar idea from the Browne System, but here even more efficacious since the knight is less active on b3 **14.fxg5 Ne5 15.Qe3 Nh7** and Black stands excellently.

In two other Danner games Whites preferred **10.Bd3** and this leads, after the same moves as in the above game, to a position where at move 13, Black has the trick **13 . . . Nxe4!** King writes that he knows of nobody other than Danner who has tried 8 . . . Qa5, but it looks well worth a punt to me.

It is always cheering and refreshing to see new ideas cropping up in the most charted waters. Probably no area of opening theory has been subjected to such rigorous scrutiny as the 6.Bg5 Najdorf, but there are still lots of new or largely untried things swimming around, for example the line 6 . . . e6 7.f4 Qc7, which Kasparov has used with success versus Timman, Ivanchuk and Lyuboyevic.

New Ideas in the Pirc Defence by John Nunn (£10.99) is of the customary high standard we have now come to expect from the good doctor's pen. Here, the concept is to keep the student abreast of the most important developments in the opening, and to elucidate the ideas behind them. Nunn therefore suggests that the book forms a complimentary volume to his earlier study *The Complete Pirc*, which is far more compendious. An example of the modern use of The Modern follows.

White: J. Hector; Black: J. Piket, Ostende 1990
1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Bc4 Nf6 5.Qf3!? . . . The notorious "Monkey's Bum", a set-up so dubbed because, on one of its first outings, the contemptuous handler of the Black pieces looked up and observed: "If this is a good opening, then I'm a Monkey's Bum!" Following his defeat the name stuck. **5 . . . Nbd7 6.Bb3 Bg7 7.g4?** . . . Way over the top. Piket reacts vigorously and the Bum blows up. **7 . . . 0-0 8.g5 Nh5 9.Nce2 e5 10.c3 exd4 11.cxd4 c5 12.Nf4 cxd4 13.Nxh5 gxh5 14.Qxh5 Nc5 15.Ne2 Qa5+ 16.Bd2 Nd3+ 17.Kd1 Nxf2+ 18.Ke1 Nd3+ 19.Kd1 Qb5 20.Rf1 Be6 21.Nf4 Bxb3+ 22.axb3 Qxb3+ 23.Ke2 Rae8 24.Ra3 Rxe4+ 25.Kf3 Rxf4+ 26.Bxf4 Ne5+ .**
White resigned.

James Plaskett

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BACKCHAT

It's auction stations as **Mat Coward** bids for a certain lady's kiss-and-tell memoirs

Negotiations were going well, and the moment had arrived to discuss the most delicate subject of all. The producer scribbled an amount on a napkin, and pushed it across the table. The agent squinted at it and pursed his lips. "Not bad for an opening shot."

"The thing is," said the producer, "if we're talking these kind of numbers, I have to know exactly what's for sale. To put it bluntly: who is she willing to give us?"

The agent took another look at the napkin. "Well . . . stick another nought on the end and you can have Geoffrey." The producer laughed. "Geoffrey? Come on, Geoffrey's a given. Geoffrey goes without saying. She wants another nought, she's got to come across with, at the least, Nigel. Maybe Norman, too."

"Fair enough," said the agent, combing his hair back with his fingers, and aligning his electronic personal organiser with the edge of the table. "Let's talk Nigel. What do you need exactly?" The producer half-closed his eyes. "Let's see. How about—yeah, this'd be good—'It was all Nigel's fault, I blame him for everything, he was against me from the start'?"

The agent smiled. "Listen, I wouldn't dream of telling you your job, but, in all frankness, getting her to say 'It's all his fault' isn't really an issue. Christ, she'd say that for free!"

An avaricious excitement lit up the producer's face. "No kidding? OK then, how about: 'Not only was he the worst chancellor ever, not only was he so fat we had to have the doors widened in the cabinet room, but he was also a homosexual KGB spy for 30 years'?"

Smugly, the agent tapped the napkin. "Don't see why not—provided you're going to be realistic about these numbers. I tell you, my client is up for this project. You keep adding the noughts, she'll keep the scalps coming. No prob."

"Terrific! Right then, what about Norman?" "What would you like," said the agent. "Tosser? Traitor? Little shit?" The producer wiped a sheen of excitement from his face: "How about knobhead?" With an airy wave, the agent replied "Knobhead, skullface, whatever you want. For another ten thou, I could probably get you dog-rapist."

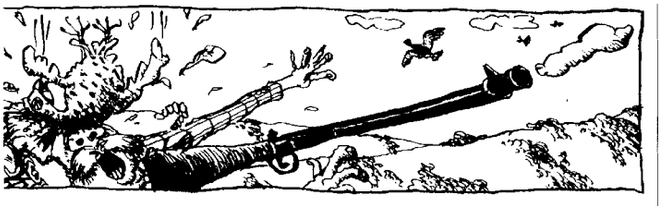
The producer was trembling with joy. "This is better than I'd dared hope. So let's go for the big one—let's see what you can offer me on John." Sipping decaff cappuccino, the agent said, "John's easy. You write it, she'll read it."

"You mean it? Fantastic. OK, this is what I want: she looks straight into the camera, weeping a little—you know, those tough tears she was always so good at, just oozing sincerity—and she says: 'I never rated that thick bastard. I begged them not to elect him.' Gulping pause, right, and then: 'Give me a gun this minute and I'll kill the useless fart myself.'" The agent stuck out his hand. "You got it. Done deal."

Over liqueurs, the producer said "You know what I don't understand: what does she need all the money for? I mean, she married a millionaire, she's made millions more since she retired, her daughter-in-law's a billion-heiress." His expression grave, the agent explained: "It's not money. It's history. She needs to know that posterity will record her statesmanship, her courage, her dignity."

"Oh, sure," said the producer, scribbling fresh figures on another napkin. "Right, yeah, understood. Dignity. No prob."

FORTEANA



Felix Bennett

Paul Sieveking on the big sleep and waking back to happiness

An AP report from Cincinnati on 16 July concerned a woman's claim to have been sexually assaulted by William Gray, who took advantage of her tendency to faint when she heard the word "sex".

Gray pleaded guilty by reason of insanity to felonious sexual penetration. The woman collapsed six times during the trial at the mention of the word. Eventually, a synonym was adopted.

I was reminded of the curious case of 17-year-old Katherine Porter from Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, who falls asleep when she laughs.

"If I am watching something funny on television, I have to force myself not to laugh," she told the press in 1990. "If I feel one coming on, I have to pull a cushion over my face and concentrate hard.

"I once fell asleep during a history lesson on the Battle of Hastings when somebody said something funny. I dreamt I had been stabbed by a Viking. I woke with a start and lashed out and my books went everywhere. It was very embarrassing."

Katherine suffers from cataplexy, a rare form of narcolepsy. Drug therapy can ameliorate the condition, but not remove it.

A young woman from Chichester exhibited another peculiarity of sleep in 1989. "I lie in until lunchtime if I don't have to work, and when I do I always come home for a nap before going out," said Tina Houghton, 18, an auxiliary nurse.

She had survived a 13-month pregnancy when the foetus went into an unexplained "form of hibernation", before resuming normal growth. Tina weighed 7lb 7oz when she was finally born. She had to be woken three times a day for feeding.

"Her last feed was at 7pm," said her mother, "and she would sleep right through the night until nine the following morning. We were never woken by her crying in the middle of the night. It was amazing."

Gesine Meyer, of Grambke near Bremen, fell from a cart when she was 16, and slept for three months. After she woke up she seemed perfectly well, but two years later, she again took to sleeping for long periods. In late 1886, she fell into a deep coma, from which she did not awaken until 15 November 1903, when a fire broke out in the village and the alarm bells were rung.

She sat up and called for her father and brother. When they went to her she asked her brother, who 17 years earlier had been a conscript, why he was not in uniform. When told what had happened, she said: "Why, I thought I had only been asleep for one night."

In 1876, a 14-year-old Swedish girl called Carolina Olsson fell into a mysterious trance-like sleep. She woke up after 32 years and 42 days, and lived for another 42 years, dying at the age of 89 in 1950. It was conjectured that she had fallen on the ice and hurt her head on her way home from school.

Her unbroken sleep is probably the longest ever recorded, apart from a coma induced by anaesthetic.

The *Guinness Book of Records* states that Elaine Esposito from Tarpon Springs, Florida, never awoke from an appendectomy on 6 August 1941, and was in a coma for 37 years and 111 days.

However, the sleeping record is probably held by Bettina Pieri, who went to bed in 1864 when she was 15, and remained there until she died, aged 88. When she awoke, which was once in every three or four years, her mind was perfectly clear.

According to the Rome newspaper *Tribuna*, the people for miles around thought she had miraculous powers, and sent their sick relatives to her in their hundreds during her waking intervals.

Her health was surprisingly good throughout her life and, although her hair turned snow white, her skin remained as clear as on the day she took to her bed.

A cousin of mine, Dr Herbert Sieveking, who had founded the Victorian Hospital in Cairo, spent seven years in bed in London until his death in 1923, declaring that he was "fed up with buttoning and unbuttoning". History does not record how much of this time was spent in sleep.

Paul Sieveking is editor of "Fortean Times"

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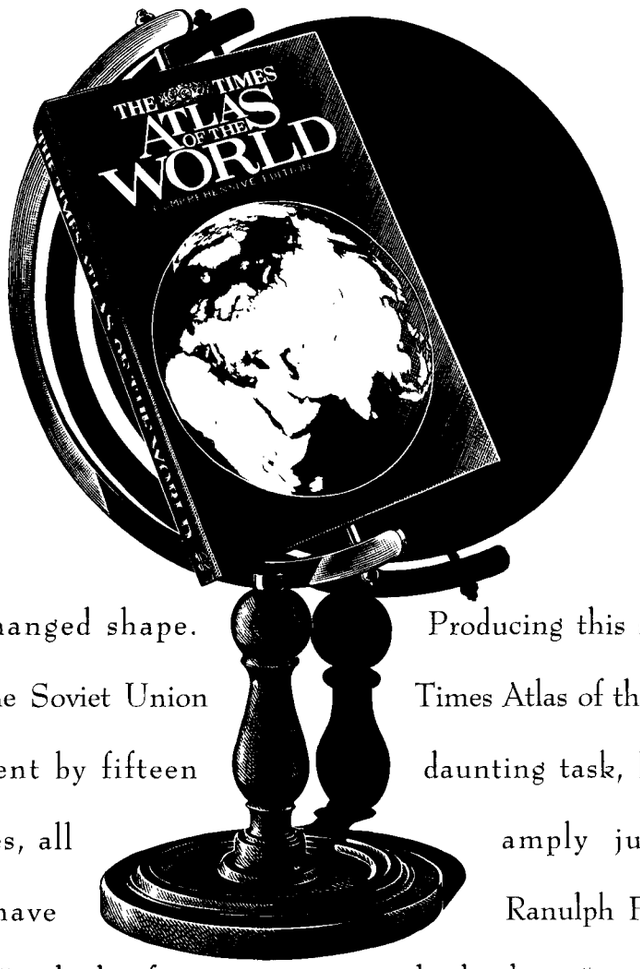
The shape of our world today.



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